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Tolstoi : the Teacher

WORKS BY CHARLES-BAUDOUIN

POETRY

En Sourdine.[1]
V *Eclats d'Obus.*
L'Arche Flottante.[1]
Baptismales.[1]
Le Miracle de Vivre.[2]

DRAMA

Ecce Homo.[1] *
La Serve Reine.

CRITICISM

Tolstoï éducateur.[3] **
Le Symbole chez Verhaeren.[4] ***

ESSAYS

La Force en Nous.[5] ***
Suggestion et Autosuggestion.[3] ***
Etudes de Psychanalyse.[3] ***

1 Editions du Carmel, Genève (Suisse).
2 Editions Lumière, Anvers (Belgique).
3 Editions Delachaux & Niestlé, Paris et Neuchâtel (Suisse).
4 Editions Ciana, Genève (Suisse).
5 Editions Société de Psychologie, Nancy (France).
* English translation by Anthony Kirby Gill (*in preparation*).
** English translation by Fred Rothwell.
*** English translation by Eden and Cedar Paul (London).

Tolstoi: the Teacher

By

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Authorized Translation by

FRED ROTHWELL

With hitherto unpublished documents
supplied by

PAUL BIROUKOF

LONDON:
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH TRUBNER & CO., LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.
1923

Printed in Great Britain by
Jas. Truscott & Son, Ltd., London.

CONTENTS

TOLSTOI: THE TEACHER

"Il n'y a qu' un homme de génie en qui l'on puisse espérer de trouver les lumières d' un maître."

J. J. Rousseau (*Nouvelle Héloïse*, iv., 14).

INTRODUCTION

THE REALISM OF TOLSTOI

IT is with a certain degree of suspicion and mistrust that men of science extend the hand of welcome to those who are outside their own circle. They are right in adopting this attitude. Their mistrust increases when directed against a man who has given proof of his powers in the realms of imagination, impulse and passion. This also is justified. All the same, the domains of the human mind are not separated from one another by water-tight compartments; everything interpenetrates and overlaps. The trinity of eclectics: sensibility, intelligence and will, has long ago become antiquated; no longer is it necessary to prove the inadequacy of this method. Too frequently, however, do we still reason as though the mind were made up of separate partitions. Now this is a grave error.

Victor Hugo wrote:

"The contraries do not exclude one another ..... A dreamy, visionary mind may at the same time be exact and precise, like Dante whose writings included rhetoric and grammar. A precise mind may also be visionary, like Newton who commented on the Apocalypse, or Leibniz who demonstrated, *nova inventa logica*, the Holy Trinity.[1]

Nothing could be truer, or could apply more fittingly to Tolstoi.

Like Leonardo da Vinci, who, if necessary, could show himself to be an engineer and a builder of bridges; like Goethe, who introduced novel and fruitful ideas into natural science; so Tolstoi appears before us as a very great artist, at times giving proof of a singularly methodical and definite mentality and dealing in masterly fashion with intellectual subjects to which he seems to give but occasional and playful attention, though speedily showing himself on an equality with the specialists in these very subjects. When a religious crisis urges him on to a criticism of the text of the four Gospels he daringly enters the field of exegesis, patiently, minutely and logically dissecting the Greek

[1]Victor Hugo. *William Shakespeare.*

lines, word for word. A regular Benedictine's task, and those who picture to themselves the artist as a prey to the unconscious and unruly caprice of the demon of inspiration need but glance through *The Four Gospels* to be speedily undeceived. Of course, Tolstoi's criticism is not beyond the range of discussion; still, at all events it *can* be discussed, and perhaps this is frequently all that is to be expected of any exegesis.

But Tolstoi is even more of a teacher, an educator . . . I boldly proclaim him a great teacher, a great educator. Like Rousseau—with whom he has so much in common—his views on education are both ingenious and profound. As *Emile* may be compared with the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and the *Rêveries d'un promeneur solitaire*, so the *Articles pédagogiques* and the *Syllabary*, closely allied to *War and Peace* and to *Anna Karenina*, show what amazing flights the human mind is capable of attaining.

We may go further and affirm that Tolstoi is more of a pedagogue than Rousseau; he has more method and draws more abundantly on the stores of science.

This is owing, in the first place, to the period in which he lived. Experimental

science is of recent date, especially in those realms which deal with man; there it scarcely existed in the time of Rousseau, whereas Tolstoi was no stranger to the works of Darwin, Spencer and Auguste Comte. Rousseau, indeed, is a terrible apriorist, a merciless logician, an implacable constructor, inspired by such men as Descartes and Spinoza, mighty builders of a logical world. Experience counts no more for him in *Emile* than in the *Contrat Social*, no more in education than in sociology. It is of so little importance that he is not conscious of the need to become a teacher himself or even to come into close contact with the child.

In the second place, the difference is due to the temperament of the two thinkers. That which attracts Tolstoi to a minute observation of the child is the very nature of his genius as a realist, i.e. an observer *par excellence.*

* * * * *

Tolstoi's fundamental realism is too easily forgotten. It is veiled from us by the stormy and tragic, the mystical and paradoxical nature of the man. It is our duty to consider it at close quarters.

True, we hear *ad nauseam* of the realism of Tolstoi the novelist. By this is meant that the artist interests himself in the realities of humble human life on their own account: in words and thoughts, gestures, forms and colours. His art partakes rather of expression than of beauty. Tolstoi is not lyrical, i.e., he describes human beings for the most part from their own point of view, not from his; he does not make them one with the rhythm of his own life, rather does his creative sympathy enable him to transfuse himself into their very essence. Nor is he a symbolist, i.e., he makes no attempt to express those echoes, those vague reverberations, which things, through some hidden analogy, evoke in the inmost recesses of the soul; to him, a thing is not the symbol of something else, the visible form of a feeling or an idea; it is just what it is, and possesses value as such. Both beings and things are self-sufficing, according to Tolstoi's pleasure. With every sense he has intense love for things. His art—powerfully subjective, seeing that it bears the stamp of an assertive personality, the mark of the lion's claw, and that otherwise it would not be art at all—is nevertheless as objective as art can be.

Still, this realism, in the case of Tolstoi, is not peculiar to the novelist. This is often forgotten, and such forgetfulness arouses a certain mistrust whenever mention is made of the "ideas" of Tolstoi. No sooner do you mention "Tolstoi" than you are confronted with "utopia." This judgment, in so rough and summary a form, strangely fails to recognize the intimate nature of Tolstoi's genius.

Even if we betake ourselves in imagination to that realm wherein Tolstoi rises highest above the domain of every-day realities—his religion—here too we find the realist. The following lines were written by me in this connection in an introduction to Tolstoi's letters to Bondarev, that peasant apostle of his who regarded the tilling of the soil as every man's first duty:[1]

"Tolstoi is essentially a realist; i.e., the realities of daily life—realities mostly cruel and frequently wretched—are the things that interest him always. His novels were realistic, and when he evolved from an artist into an apostle his faith became realistic. Neither lyrical, symbolical nor metaphysical

[1]Tolstoi. *Lettres à Bondarev*, Ed. *Cahiers du Carmel*. Geneva, Paris, 1918.

in the least; this was not in Tolstoi's temperament. But his soul was realistic and active, domineeringly active, obsessed by crude social realities, by poverty and misery, the shivering of those who are cold, the plaintive looks of those who are hungry."

Here Tolstoi retains the attitude of a practical mind, of a man putting his affairs in order and attending to that which is most pressing. The question of urgency and utility, of the degree of utility in actions and things, is at the root of his entire moral conception. This is well expressed in *What are we to do?* And it is repeated in the preface which Tolstoi wrote to Bondarev's work:

"The main idea of the work is as follows: In every circumstance of life, the principal thing is not to know what is good and necessary, but to know which—among those things that are good and necessary—is first in importance, which is second, which is third, etc. . . . . . .

. . . . Just as love for a woman does not consist in reading novels to her if she is hungry, nor in giving her valuable ear-rings if she is cold; so it is impossible to regard love for others as consisting in amusing those

who are surfeited with the good things of life or in allowing the cold and hungry to die in misery and wretchedness."[1]

It is because of the realism of his faith that Tolstoi attributes so much importance to the material work indispensable to human existence.

Following Tolstoi in his exegesis, we also find the realist where we should least expect to do so. If we open *The Four Gospels*, we discover that his criticism of the Gospel text is a proof of the essentially practical—and anything but metaphysical—trend of his mind.

In the introduction, he defines "revelation" as he understands the word. He does not regard it as an initiation into the mysteries of a noumenal, metaphysical sky, far away overhead, but as an answer to the moral, practical and urgent question he had long before formulated in the words: What are we to do?

"What I call revelation is that which answers the question unsolved by reason, which filled me with despair and led me to the brink of suicide: What is the meaning of my life?"

[1]Tolstoi et Bondarev. *Le Travail*. Flammarion, Paris.

The interpretation of the beginning of the Gospel according to Saint John reveals the realistic temperament of Tolstoi in strange fashion.

The Greek text runs:

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

translated by the Church as follows:

"-In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God."

This is metaphysics. *A priori*, it does not satisfy Tolstoi who offers the following interpretation:

"The beginning of everything has become the understanding of life. And the understanding of life has taken the place of God. And it is the understanding of life that has become God."

Tolstoi's reasons are subtle:

ἐν with a verb of motion may signify change.

ἦν from the verb *εἶναι* means change as well as existence, and may be translated by the word "become."

λόγος has a great number of meanings, and that of speech, though the primordial one, is impossible in this connection.

"If you ask a Greek scholar—one who is

ignorant of Church doctrine—to translate the first verse of Saint John's Gospel, he will reject seven impossible meanings of the word λόγος: word, speech, talk, hearing, eloquence, account, respect."

Tolstoi chooses "understanding," and implies the words τῆς ζωῆς—which are expressed in the First Epistle of Saint John.

This initial interpretation of Tolstoi is very curious; it is subtle . . . . perhaps too subtle. Indeed Tolstoi drags the Gospel in "by the head and shoulders," so to speak—a thing he reproaches the Church for doing, though in another connection. The need for realism compels Tolstoi to eliminate all metaphysics.

Equally significant is the interpretation of Saint Luke, chapter 7, verse 28:

Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμὶν οὐκ ἐγηγερται ἐν γεννητοῖς γυναικῶν μείζων Ἰωάννου τοῦ Βαπτιστοῦ· ὁ δὲ μικρότερος ἐν τῇ Βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν μείζων αὐτοῦ ἐστι.

He accepts the ordinary translation of the first sentence:

"Verily I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater than John the Baptist."

But he does not accept the second sentence:

"Generally these words are translated: But he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he. This translation is bad because he that is least in the Kingdom of God is contrasted with one who is greatest in some other place. We ought to say: *He that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he who is not in the Kingdom.* What makes this translation irregular more than all else is that it destroys the sense both of what goes before and of what follows. It has just been stated that John is greater than all men, and suddenly he has become less than the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, whilst Jesus does nought but preach of the Kingdom of Heaven as being for all. Here αὐτοῦ is an adverb signifying 'here below'; then the meaning is quite logical. *John is less, inferior to all, according to human judgment . . . . . he is a beggar.* But it is said that the least is sometimes *the greatest* in the Kingdom of God."

*   *   *   *   *

In short, the hereafter does not appeal to Tolstoi's intellect. His religion is concrete, terrestrial, human. It tills the ground; its feet adhere to the clod. It is but little con-

cerned to know what there is beyond the clouds. It is what is most urgent that appeals to it; now, the most urgent of all things is to find out what to do immediately here below.

As I have stated elsewhere,[1] metaphysics as pure speculation does not interest Tolstoi. He affirms immortality, i.e., the existence of the eternal within us. But he utters no pronouncement as to the form of this immortality. Is it personal or not? No sooner does he formulate an hypothesis on the question than he generally corrects himself and remarks that it is a figure of speech, an imperfect way of imagining to ourselves what we cannot know.

Nor is his God metaphysical. His God is interior : a force acting within the very centre of our heart. He does not, however, explain things. He is not the creator of matter, but the "father of life," Tolstoi says in *My Religion.* The dogma of the creation of the world by God "perverts"[1] the human intellect. Again :

" To seek the origin of evil is as absurd

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[1]*Sur le Journal intime de Tolstoï.* Le Carmal 1917, No. 8.

[1]*Journal intime,* 1895-1900; Jeheber, Geneva.

as to want to know the origin of the world. It is not our business to know where evil comes from but to know how to fight it, how to apply love." [2]

Such is Tolstoi's religion. It is agnostic, confesses its ignorance and adapts itself accordingly. It is satisfied with knowing what permits of action and the finding of the way: it is pragmatical. Possessed of a compass, it dispenses with the stars, for the stars are cloud-obscured.

* * * * *

Like every temperament, this innate realism is a prism which in its own way distorts reality itself, a coloured glass adding its own tint to the object seen through it. Such a temperament carries with it certain postulates, certain preconceived points of view which are so natural to the subject, so organic—if I may use the word—that he is no more aware of them than of his own peculiar mental twists, his unconscious gestures and wonted gait. Tolstoi, when criticising the text of the Gospels, does not say—and does not know—that one of the guiding principles

[2] *Journal intime*, 1895-1900. Jeheber, Geneva.

of his criticism is to eliminate metaphysical interpretations and by every means in his power to try and find a moral and practical meaning. In his case, this principle is not explicit, it is implicit and latent. He is no more conscious of it than of the degree of convergence of his eyes; and yet the point at which they converge conditions his entire vision of things.

It may be that this prism is apt to distort the object most when this object is poles asunder from the practical realities of daily life. In art, for instance, the extremely personal vision of Tolstoi, the realist, interprets but imperfectly any art that has nothing to do with the facts of life; symbolical art repels him. Doubtless this is why he is so harsh in his criticism of Wagner, Ibsen and Maeterlinck.[1]

Hence, too, for the most part, the scathing way in which he judges the visionary of Zarathustra:

"The immoral, coarse, emphatic and insensate prattle of Nietzsche."[2]

Apart from such cases as these, however, of all prisms that of the realistic tempera-

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[1] *What is art?*

[2] Tolstoi. *Lettres*, II., Stock, Paris. *(L'Art et la Critique).*

ment would seem to be the one which must distort realities least. Tolstoi observes and describes human realities with too much love and fidelity to be incapable of studying them, or to extract from them nothing but dreams and utopias.

* * * * * *

As an educator, Tolstoi best demonstrates his capacity for studying human realities with the necessary definiteness and method. Not only does he observe the nature and the deep-rooted needs of the child—the real child, not the theoretical one of the pedagogues—but he applies his realistic and practical mind to the investigation of the material organization of schools, to the criticism of bills and laws dealing with public instruction.

In this connection, one of his most interesting articles on education is entitled: *Projet d'un plan général pour l'organisation des écoles populaires.*[1] This is the criticism of a scheme elaborated by the Russian government, and Tolstoi, with his good common sense acquired from close contact with the people and his intimate knowledge of

[1] First volume of the *Articles pédagogiques.* Complete works, Vol. XIII.

their children, takes a malicious delight in showing up everything artificial, impractical and impracticable in this project created by theorists who are a thousand miles away from the realities of life:—

"My opinion regarding this scheme has already been formed in spite of myself, owing to the contradiction between my practical knowledge, acquired by the closest of relations with the people, and the absolute divergence between the plan and the reality of things."

He knows the people, the people who toil and struggle, who are afraid of anything new, of State promises, the people who mistrust taxes, that form of loan for which returns a hundred-fold are promised though no tangible results are immediately forthcoming. This criticism, long prior to Tolstoi's religious crisis and the birth of his anarchical ideas, has, it must be noted, nothing stereotyped or systematic about it, nor is it a result of the theoretical negation of the State, as he formulates it at a later date. It is the outcome of his experience of the people:

"It has everywhere and always been observed that parents are more ready to buy books, slates and pencils, so that these things

may remain all the time in the house, than to give money for the purchase of these supplies in the schools.''

He is repelled by whatsoever smacks of the *a priori*. The needs of childhood, as well as the needs of the people, are complex and require to be studied at close quarters in a spirit of living sympathy. Impossible to state offhand and with an aloof air what these needs are and how to satisfy them: "To define the programme of the public elementary schools seems to me altogether impossible."

A fortiori, he regards as disastrous anything that would imply a monopoly of instruction. In matters of education, we are still but at the experimental stage. Free investigation is the only method we may employ. Moreover, Tolstoi, naturally a keen individualist, knows what value each man attaches to his own freedom of action, and how much greater is the output of untrammelled effort than that of work imposed and circumscribed.

". . . . . . No one will desire to found a school when he has not the right to appoint the masters, to replace them, to choose the text-books, to draw up a syllabus."

Freedom, however, is not disorder. An organization is essential, and so there must be present an element of precision and definiteness. Tolstoi is annoyed when he sees how insubstantial and inorganic is the government scheme. Much talking to no purpose, tautology and approximation. Nothing inspired by the need of order and exactness:

"The entire scheme, as readers may see, abounds in articles advocating that elementary schools are public establishments, that the priests can teach when they have time, that guardians have no right whatsoever . . . . that private individuals may teach, that young maidens may also be taught . . . . . that the inspector must inspect schools, ... that fees cannot be exacted twice, that the pupils may attend school or not . . . . etc., etc. Reading this scheme, we are amazed, if we live in the country, that such articles could have been written."

On the other hand, the precision manifested by the government is illusory. The fact that a child, at such an hour and such a day, is a year older than he was the night before, corresponds to no deep-grounded reality. On that day, the child did not undergo any sudden

metamorphosis. And Tolstoi ridicules the framers of the scheme, and humorously takes them to task on quite an inoffensive article:

"Article 63. Pupils may enter the elementary school from the age of eight years onwards. . . .

Why from the age of eight years and not from six years and three and a half months?"

Is this the paltry jesting of a great man? Perhaps, though beneath the jest there is a fund of good common sense which considers living realities and refuses to adapt itself to an arbitrarily imposed decree that has nothing to do with the facts of life.

* * * * * *

In the same spirit Tolstoi criticizes German school teaching and its Russian adepts.[1] He speaks of the "pedantry habitual to the Germans." Regarding the text-books of Bounakov and Evtouchevsky, teachers after the German method, he writes: "The first thing that strikes one is this strange attitude towards imaginary children, children whom

[1] *Sur l'instruction du peuple*, 1875. Second volume of the *Articles pédagogiques;* vol XIV. of the *Oeuvres complètes.*

I, at all events, never saw in the Russian Empire." On reading the story of a fox, invented by Bounakov for the use of children, Tolstoi the realist leaps to his feet; he declares it to be reeking with artificiality and insincerity:

"In this tale, everything is arbitrary: that a fox could have stolen a duck from a peasant in winter, that the peasant should set a trap for the fox, that the latter should sleep in his lair in the daytime when as a matter of fact he sleeps only at night, that the lair, dug in winter and covered with boards, should serve no purpose, that the fox should eat the flesh of a horse: a thing he never does. The pretended trick of the fox running in front of the hunter, the hillock, and the hunter who refrains from firing so that he may not miss the quarry, are all arbitrary. In fact, everything, from beginning to end, is absurd, as any peasant's child could prove to the author of the story, if he were permitted to speak without raising his hand."

The system of such teachers of the people is radically false. In the first place, they do not know the people:

"The ignorance of pedagogues, of those

who write text-books and frame rules and regulations, is so dense, and the desire to know the people and their wants so feeble, that the influence of reality on these methods is no check whatsoever to the progress of their work."

In the second place, they do not know the child; they are utterly lacking in the teacher's first qualification: that he must be a psychologist, capable of fathoming the child soul.

"Teachers after the German method do not even understand this intuitiveness, this genuine development of life, this utter abhorrence of falsity, this spirit of raillery continually on the alert against everything artificial. All these things are characteristic of the children of Russian peasants; only for this reason do they carry on their task so boldly—as I have seen for myself—beneath the gaze of two-score children making fun of them."

In short, they are pure theorists. They systematize, and so complicate, the living reality which is easy to understand intuitively, if not to explain.

"School instruction is in a position similar to that of a science which enquired

as to how man must walk, which started formulating rules for walking and teaching them to children, recommending that they draw in certain muscles and relax certain others."

* * * * *

Nor is Tolstoi content with criticizing. Himself a creator, such negative work he regards as but the preparation for the positive work of instructive edification. In the same article he elaborates, point by point, a scheme of academic organization at once clear, simple, and practicable. He advocates the idea of model state-organized schools as against the idea of private monopoly. There will be one model school in each district. The schools themselves must not be the outcome of educational dogma or of any sort of apriorism, but rather experimental centres. And they will serve to set before the masters of free schools improvements based on new methods that have been tested and found useful.

"This is not to be a model school in the sense that there are to be introduced cubes, pictures, and all sorts of stupid German inventions, but rather in the sense that *experiments* will be made on peasant children—the

children who attend the other schools—by the simplest methods capable of being adopted by most of the (free) masters. Then the inspector will visit all the large schools; on Sunday he will invite the masters to his house, point out their faults and shortcomings, propound new methods, give them advice and books for their own instruction . . . . . . Should he have time, he will do the same in the case of the smaller schools. The obligation, however, to exercise supervision over the assistant masters would be incumbent on the masters of the large schools, each of whom would go round the schools in his own district and summon the assistant masters to meet him, either on a Sunday or on a week-day."

Tolstoi wants above all a simple practical system, one that is not expensive and that will receive the spontaneous support of the people:

"When the people themselves choose their own centres for the schools, when they appoint the masters, fix their salaries and profit by the advantages the school procures for them, then only will they increase the sums expended on schools should this be necessary."

In the same spirit Tolstoi reproaches the State for brutally interfering, for closing the schools, substituting for the large number of small schools a small number of large ones which are costly, impracticable—seeing that they are frequently so far away from the villages—and consequently regarded with disfavour by the people. Thus it becomes difficult to get the people to pay taxes for schools which will yield them no advantage whatsoever. In short, Tolstoi favours school instruction limited to the winter months for the poorer peasants. Out working in the fields they will be in the "school of life"—which is quite as good as the other.

The "school of life"! This phrase well expresses the realism of Tolstoi who was the enemy of everything theoretical and artificial, of the mere trappings of life. For it is life that he would breathe into the very walls of the school. We shall now see how he intends to do this.

PART I

THE SPRINGS OF EDUCATION

CHAPTER I

INFLUENCES

About the time that Tolstoi began to interest himself in school-teaching, a revival of education was beginning to manifest itself. Three names at once leap to the mind: Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel.

Moreover, these names express the evolution of one and the same stream of thought; thesis, antithesis and synthesis, as Hegel would say. Rousseau, an inspired theorist, launches the idea; Pestalozzi adapts it to his own temperament, and, man of feeling and action as he is, applies it. Lastly, Froebel aims at giving a stricter theoretical expression to the practical side of Pestalozzi.

Emile is the starting-point. It is this book that invites us to break away from routine, to study the child first, before inflicting on him a stereotyped education, to exercise the senses prior to the mind, and to increase the spirit of initiative by a greater degree of freedom and activity as well as by

more physical culture. Here, as elsewhere, Rousseau advocates the return to nature. But this is something more than a simple return.

It was in Switzerland that Pestalozzi submitted the new idea to the fiery test of practice. He is no theorist. He accepts compromises and contradictions, abolishes punishments and rewards, though still wavering between constraint and freedom. But what does it matter; is he not experimenting? It is by means of successive tentative gropings that the new equilibrium is to be found. Pestalozzi looks upon intuition (*Anschauung*) as the basis of all knowledge; he defines it as "the immediate impression produced by the physical and moral worlds on our exterior and interior senses." In his fidelity to Rousseau, he would frequently replace instruction through books by direct contact with reality. To effect this, it is first necessary to teach the child to observe and become acquainted with everything around him. "Knowledge begins in man's environment and extends concentrically."

And so Pestalozzi finds himself the initiator of "thing-teaching," which with him takes the form of *Anschauungsunter-*

richt (intuition-teaching). By means of organized questions and answers, the child learns to distinguish and classify familiar objects, and to deal with related concepts regarding them, from the most concrete (high and low, containing and contained) to the most abstract (possibility, existence). This method is more especially interesting by reason of the vogue it was destined to have in Germany in Tolstoi's time. Soon, however, the new principles show a tendency to become dogmatic, to lose the breath of freedom and life which they had at first. According to Pestalozzi, the child, in proceeding from the near to the distant, should begin by enumerating the various parts of his body, including the bones of the jaws. (After all, this catalogue style of exercise, so alien to the real spirit of his method, should rather be attributed to Krusi, a disciple of Pestalozzi). Where, however, it appears as though life were almost absent, Pestalozzi inspires it anew by his ardour and his utter devotion to an idea to which he sacrificed not only his possessions but also his strength and his time right on to the end of his life. [1]

[1]Compare Gabriel Compayré, *Pestalozzi*. Delaplane, Paris.

Froebel lived for two years at Yverdon, breathing in the spirit of Pestalozzi's teaching. He felt the necessity of doing more scientifically what his master had done. "Our greatest practical educators," he said, "even including Pestalozzi, I regard as too primitive, too empirical and capricious, and consequently unscientific." All the same, Froebel did not neglect the practical side of things. Pestalozzi had recognized *interest* as the principle of all progress in study; the soil must be prepared to receive knowledge. The classic methods are too neglectful of the soil, the pupil, the subject, and concern themselves only with the object of knowledge. Froebel develops this idea. He teaches that knowledge cannot be separated from life. "To live, to act, to know, always strike a simultaneous chord, either one or two of the terms being accented." Of a synthetic turn of mind, he makes no distinction for himself between practice and theory, nor for the child between activity and instruction. It is in order to gratify this activity that he insists on a garden being at the disposal of the child. The kindergarten in which he realizes his conception means this first of all, though afterwards it comes to mean

that the child himself should be "gardened" like a plant[1] and, like it, placed in the conditions assigned by nature. In a word, it is Froebel who attaches supreme importance to games in education; play is the spontaneous manifestation of the child's activity; and, seeing that activity is the basis of all knowledge, play must be utilized in support of instruction.

Life and nature, freedom and activity—such are the themes to which Rousseau continually recurs. That which to him was potential became actual to Pestalozzi and Froebel. The influence of his mind overshadows them. His very style, even his God—that nature-taught God to whom all dogma is abhorrent—reappear in them as in a powerful stream of restored life. How is Tolstoi to deal with this stream?

Tolstoi was quite young when he discovered Rousseau and found in him a kindred soul.[2] He loved him with peculiar fervour and passion. At one time he carried about a medallion portrait of Rousseau, wearing it as a sacred image, and through-

[1]Froebel. *L'éducation de l'homme.* Karl Schmidt. *Geschichte der Pädagogik*, 1876.

[2]Tolstoi. *Vie et Oeuvres.* Fragments colligés et annotés par P. Biroukov. Mercure de France, Paris. Vol. I., p. 174.

out the entire course of his mental life the influence of the great French regenerator was primordial. He has left us a list of the books which exercised most influence over him in youth, calling them "grande, très grande, considérable," according to the degree of this influence. The mention "considérable" is applied to the *Gospel of Saint Matthew*, to the *Sermon on the Mount*, to Dickens' *David Copperfield* and to Rousseau's *Confessions* and *Emile.*

Tolstoi was by no means unacquainted with the developments which followed the stream of restoration. After his first journey abroad, he took an active and practical interest in the peasant schools during the winter of 1859-1860. At that time he was already in the throes of a moral crisis, plunged in tortures of doubt regarding human life and destiny. His literary work appeared to him quite devoid of meaning, and he tried to find in the education of children something solid and certain as to its aim and purpose, something wherein good and evil should be free from all trace of doubt. But even here the spirit of doubt assailed him, acting as a mighty spur to his research work. It was this influence that again drove

him abroad on the 3rd of July, 1860. He has described this first crisis in his *Confessions*: "It is strange for me now to remember how I shifted and turned about in order to realize my desire to teach, knowing full well, deep within my soul, that I could teach nothing that was necessary, being myself ignorant thereof. After a year spent in dealing with school life, I went abroad for the second time, to learn the art of instructing others, though myself quite ignorant. . ."

Thus it was with the firm intention of perfecting his educational knowledge that Tolstoi undertook the journey. He was faithful to his object.

First he crosses Germany, stopping for a day in Berlin to visit the schools. Then he visits the schools of Saxony, and these leave upon him a deplorable impression:

"I have visited the schools. A frightful state of things! Prayers for the king; blows showered on the little ones; rote and repetition; children crippled and terrified!" [1]

On the 19th of July he leaves for Kissengen, where he makes the acquaintance of Froebel the sociologist, nephew of the founder of the kindergarten.

[1] Tolstoi. *Vie et Oeuvres*, Vol. IV.

The illness and death of his brother Nicolas, who died of consumption at Hyères, caused Tolstoi to turn his steps southward. All the same, he continued his interest in educational matters and visited the communal schools at Marseilles. Here too he finds a state of routine prevalent:

"Not a single pupil could do the simplest sum in addition or subtraction, though at the same time, by means of abstract numbers, they could easily and rapidly work out long problems and multiply thousands by thousands. They replied very well to questions dealing with the history of France which they had learnt by heart, but when I questioned them in a different order from that given in the text-book, I was informed that Henri IV. had been killed by Julius Caesar."

The general impression received is no better than in Saxony. "To judge by these schools," says Tolstoi, "you would think you were dealing with a 'coarse, ignorant, hypocritical people, utterly prejudiced and almost savage.'" Nevertheless, as he looks at the people of Marseilles, he is well aware that they are nothing of the kind:

"The French people are almost what they

believe themselves to be: clever, intelligent, sociable free-thinkers, in a word, civilized human beings."

Meditating upon the Marseilles working man, who is anything but stupid, Tolstoi asks himself the question: "Where can he have learnt all he knows?" And he adds:

"I straightway found my answer in Marseilles, for, after visiting the schools, I began to frequent the streets, the public-houses, the cafés-concerts, the museums, workshops, docks and libraries."

In short, he is amazed at the contrast presented between the school and everyday life, and discovers that it is the latter, not a routine school curriculum, that really teaches and educates. He might indeed say with Froebel:

"Experience has frequently demonstrated the utility of that course of instruction which to a large extent enables a child to learn, quite apart from attendance at a school." [1]

In the course of the same trip, Tolstoi again visited schools in England; then he returned to Germany, where educational developments had made most progress. He stays at Weimar, being especially interested

[1] *L'Education de l'Homme.*

in the kindergartens conducted by a pupil of Froebel, Mina Schelhorn, who was very enthusiastic in showing Tolstoi the works and games carried on by the children, thus enabling him to become fully acquainted with Froebel's ideas.

In *Vie et Oeuvres* a picturesque account is given by Julius Stötzer of Tolstoi's visit, incognito, to his own class—also at Weimar. Such was Tolstoi's passion for education that he wanted to take away with him the children's exercise books, to the grave scandal of the honest Stötzer!

From Weimar, Tolstoi proceeded to Gotha where he visited other kindergartens and made the acquaintance of well-known instructors of youth. Then he went to Berlin, where he saw the son of Diesterweg. This interview with "a frigid pedant," as Tolstoi called him, proved disappointing. No matter; he had penetrated into the mental atmosphere of Diesterweg as he had penetrated into that of Froebel. And Diesterweg was the direct disciple of Pestalozzi.

Diesterweg (1790-1866) was at the head of the Berlin "séminaire," where he had undertaken the training of masters. Thus he exercised considerable influence over German

schools. He developed the Pestalozzian method of the *Anschauungsunterricht*, which he introduced into the State schools. Indeed, he is less deserving of mention for the originality of his views than for the activity and zeal with which he endeavoured to carry out Pestalozzi's ideas. In 1846, twenty years after Pestalozzi's death, the latter's birthday anniversary was celebrated in fifty-nine towns throughout Switzerland and Germany, the chief organizer of this commemoration being Diesterweg. Such zeal, moreover, was not wholly disconnected with his disgrace and dismissal from office, which took place the following year.

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In this way Tolstoi became acquainted with the state of contemporary education. More especially did he feel attracted by the Pestalozzi-Froebel stream of thought, to which he was initiated by those who were most competent along these lines. He studied this trend of ideas not only in books but also by actual inspection of the schools themselves. There can be no doubt of this influence, though it was far from being a passive one.

Tolstoi was of too inquiring—and too unquiet—a nature simply to say "Amen" to anything whatsoever. He was too prone to criticism and contradiction to accept passively the ideas of another. Even the judgment he pronounced on his predecessors was amazingly severe.

In his articles on education we find such ill-tempered passages as the following:

"There spring up thousands of theories, of the strangest and most diverse kind, devoid of foundation, such as those of Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel."[1]

Or again:

"Kindergartens (one of the most monstrous creations of the new education).[2]

The chief fault that Tolstoi finds with the new schools is their pedantry. Blind faith in methods creates a new dogmatism which is quite as dangerous as the old. The form changes, but once again the life is stifled by the form. Pestalozzian and Froebelian schools obtained a firm footing in Germany; it was there that Tolstoi saw them, and his whole nature rebels against German discipline and pedantry.

[1] *Articles pédagogiques.* 1st vol. *Sur l'Instruction publique.*

[2] *Articles pédagogiques.* 2nd vol. *Sur l'Instruction du peuple.*

Something of a reflex nature, so to speak, was manifestly aroused within him, a sort of rancour he would not acknowledge. More than once in Germany must he have experienced the sense of disillusion with which Diesterweg's son filled him. His spontaneous, warm-hearted temperament, so hostile to rules and restrictions, his Russian nature —and that the nature of a Tolstoi!—must often have been cruelly hurt by his reception at the hands of these "frigid pedants." Often in his criticisms has he occasion to contrast the Russian spirit with the German :

"The Russian child neither can nor will believe—he has too much respect for his master and for himself—that he is being questioned seriously when he is asked whether the ceiling is down or up, or how many feet he has." [1]

In this whimsical outburst we recognize an illusion to the Pestalozzian method, the *Anschauungsunterricht*. In the German schools visited by Tolstoi, this method was applied with a magisterial dullness which fully justifies the criticism here passed. Rochow had compiled a series of dialogues between master and pupil under the titles of :

[1] *Sur l'Instruction du peuple.*

Manual in catechism form, and *Catechism of sane reason.* The method speedily lent itself to the strangest excesses. For instance, Zelter went so far as to teach his pupils the musical scale by the method of inducing them to mount a ladder of seven rungs. Pföhlmann, in Bavaria, gave geography lessons by representing rivers as furrows cut out in a board and filled with water; another master represented the flagellation of Christ by whipping a pupil. Moreover, the *Anschauungsunterricht* became an occasion for classifying and cataloguing, explaining and defining everything. Stress was laid on the concepts of reality, of possibility, and of necessity. These lessons resembled an enumeration of the Kantian categories.

As may easily be imagined, all this is repulsive to Tolstoi's common sense. His temper is aroused. He delights in caricaturing an "intuition" lesson at which he was present. The master set before the pupils a picture representing a fish. They were to say what they saw. At first they answered a fish; but that was not right. They tried for a long time, propounding more or less absurd answers, until finally the master solemnly announced that they had before them "the image of a fish."

Nevertheless, Tolstoi does not confine himself to dealing with the exaggerations and distortions of the method : there is something he regards as false and artificial in the method itself. We need only refer to the passage is which he compares education to a science which would teach walking by recommending the contraction of certain muscles, whereas life teaches walking with the greatest ease before the one who walks even knows that he has muscles at all. Tolstoi inveighs against the *analytical* spirit which controls the new education from beginning to end. This explains why he regards kindergartens as something "monstrous." The fact is that Froebel lays down analysis as the basis of his teaching—though free to complete it subsequently by synthesis. In his book *The Education of Man*, he continually insists on progress from the simple to the complex; whereas life, as a matter of fact, begins by creating the complex, and human intelligence alone subsequently decomposes this complex into simple elements. Here, in my opinion, is the deep-lying reason of Tolstoi's criticism. It is this spirit of analysis which makes one ask children whether the ceiling is down or up. They do

not understand such a question; or rather they are bored by it.

I would express Tolstoi's idea as follows: Life at the outset is the realization of a perfect circle: analytical pedagogy aims at drawing this circle by starting with a regular polygon the number of whose sides it multiplies indefinitely without ever reaching the perfection of the circle. Hence life, which they claim to respect, is again misunderstood. Its suppleness is changed into rigidity, and it is *that* which is "monstrous."

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And so Tolstoi finds himself definitely in the new stream of thought, a stream which insists on life, spontaneity, the study of the child's needs. He is more of a Pestalozzian and a Froebelian than he likes to say—though less than one might have thought. He finds that the current has turned aside, and so he goes back to the source to make a fresh start. He first wants the return to nature, from which the analytical method is again deviating. And now he goes back to Rousseau, convinced, along with the French

philosopher, that nature is kind; perhaps he does not always believe it intellectually, but he does believe it with his entire being, as though by a sort of instinct. He likes to set up the child as a model for the adult.

Not only is this propensity familiar to him at the end of his life, it has been so at all times. In the *Diary of Prince Nekludov*, a short autobiographical story published at Lucerne in 1857, we find—he is speaking of a crowd of society people who have been listening to a poor Tyrolese singer and afterwards scorn to fling him even a copper—a paragraph, in the form of an apostrophe, reminding us of Rousseau and clearly expressing the primitive sanity of the child and its perversion by society:

"Why were you all this evening on the balcony, listening respectfully to the songs of the little mendicant? And if he had been willing to continue singing, you would still have kept silence to listen to him. Could anyone drive *you* out of your home-land, even for a fortune, and compel *you* to go to a tiny corner of Lucerne? Could one, for any amount of money, keep *you* on a balcony for half an hour, and force *you* to remain there silent and motionless? No! Still there is

one thing alone that makes you act so, one thing for all time that will move you more powerfully than everything else in life, and that is the need of poetry—a need which you do not recognize, but which you feel and always will feel, as long as anything human remains within you. The word "poetry" seems to you ridiculous, you employ it in jest; only as existing in children and simple maidens do you recognize the love of things poetical; you even make sport of it, for what you want is something positive. Children, however, make very sane observations on life; they love and know what man ought to love and what brings happiness, whereas life has troubled and perverted you to such a degree that you mock the very thing you love and seek after what you hate and what brings you misfortune. You are so spoiled that you do not understand what you owe to the poor little Tyrolese who has given you undiluted pleasure, and yet you feel yourselves bound, gratuitously and without any advantage or pleasure to yourselves, to humble yourselves in the presence of a lord, and, no one knows why, to sacrifice on his behalf your own tastes and even your peace of mind! What folly, what inexplicable madness!"

After all, this is not an act of blind faith in the "goodness" of nature. Rousseau looks upon man as born good, Tolstoi looks upon him as born *healthy*, and modern society is frequently the bearer of poison germs. As a rule, we find this primitive state of health and sanity in the child, and it is our duty to see that he is not poisoned. This is why we should be very prudent in our methods, why we should impose on the child our dogmas, whatever they be, as little as possible. It is not so much a matter of moulding the soul as of preventing it from taking a wrong turn. Tolstoi holds this conviction very stoutly. He has already expressed it in his tale of the 'Two Hussars' (1856), in that blunt paradoxical form natural to him:

"The best things always happen by chance; the more uneasy you become, the more do things go badly. In the village, education is seldom thought of; and that is why, perchance, a good education is frequently to be obtained there. In particular, this is what happened in the case of Lisa. Anna Fedorovna, by reason of her narrow-mindedness and carelessness of disposition, gave Lisa no education of any kind, she learned neither music nor French, though

this latter would have been so useful; but, as chance had it, her late husband and herself had been blessed with a strong well-favoured daughter. Anna Fedorvna handed her over to the nurse, fed her, clothed her in a cotton dress and sheep-skin shoes, sent her out into the fields to gather mushrooms and berries, had her taught reading and arithmetic by a pupil from the seminary, with the result that, after sixteen years had passed, she recognised in Lisa a friend and companion, always gay and cheerful, and an active efficient housekeeper."

But we need not therefore leap to the conclusion that Tolstoi despises education; the zeal with which, as we have seen, he enquires into the various methods of instruction, testifies to the contrary. He believes in education and will always believe in it, but there is in him none of that superstition which inspires pedantry and dogmatism and the belief in the infallibility of a method—things which he regards with horror, seeing that they stereotype life itself. He gives up his strength, his time, his close attention to the work of school instruction; he draws up a *Syllabary* but he does not compile, as does Rochaw, a *Catechism of sound reason.*

Though following in the wake of Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel, he nevertheless repudiates them, mainly because the 'ready-made' is altogether repulsive to him and the ideas of these teachers have become a doctrine. The consequence is that he goes back to the source from which they started.

CHAPTER II

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD AND BOYHOOD

We now know what Tolstoi, in the matter of education, borrowed from the ideas of others. Still, he must have been indebted to no one but himself for a great deal, for his wonderful understanding of the child mind, at all events. And what helps him so fully to understand the child is that he can recall his own childhood in detail, with its sensations and experiences.

Is it a mere commonplace to remember one's childhood? Not at all. In the case of most of us, a few memories emerge, and these become fewer and fewer the farther we go back. Frequently they are not even memories, but rather archæological reconstructions of what our parents have told us. Even

when they *are* memories, they are mostly distorted, scanty and arid. We see the event again, though not its living essence; we are not aware of the particular first emotion that accompanied it and gave it value and importance. We have forgotten what we felt; for the most part we attribute to the child we were the mode of reaction and the feelings of the adult we are now. The inmost substance of our childhood dwells in forgetfulness: either total oblivion or the distortion of adult childhood. The result is that most of us no longer understand the child. At times it seems as though his inner life were negligible, that he is a stupid little animal or an indifferent little thing—we imagine him as capable of judging and reasoning like ourselves. But the living being that has its own specific life, as Rousseau has expressed it, the child who is neither a thing nor a man—of him we know nothing.

There are several reasons for this forgetfulness: remoteness in time, first of all. Then there is the ever more pressing urge of life and action, and this effects a sorting out of our recollections, incessantly offering us those that are most serviceable in practical life, and neglecting those that are important

only as mental states or poetical fancies. And so once again we have this *repression*, which psycho-analysis reveals as a genuine function of life, and which is in operation from childhood onwards for the purpose of removing from our consciousness impressions and memories that are painful, blameworthy or discreditable.

Nevertheless, certain individuals are exceptions to the law, and Tolstoi is one of these. He is temperamentally inclined towards self-analysis and self-observation, to listen to himself living; this was always a characteristic of his, even in childhood; the result being that his impressions possessed greater keenness, such acuteness indeed that remoteness had no longer any power to efface them. In addition, Tolstoi is a great artist, by which we mean that practical appeals, though very powerful in this man of action, this realist, leave his mind free to revise its impressions. In short, he is a man of moral scruples, inclined to accuse and humiliate himself rather than to indulge in self-glorification like the Pharisee of the parable. Such shame as others would repress he cultivates to the point of self-torture. The most evident causes of forgetfulness are

in his case strangely attenuated. He remembers himself as few men do: he knows what there is in the soul of a child.

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He knows—for he can remember—that the child is a person conscious of his worth and of his rights. Not indeed a person like ourselves, though distinctly a person, all the same. And he is convinced that the child is this from his earliest years. We will not lay stress on his recollection of swaddling-clothes, that prison against which he remembers protesting in impotent rage [1]—for the authenticity of such a memory may be disputed, though it is quite plausible. Let us, however, open the pages of *Childhood*—that autobiographical work, in which, indeed, the events are partly fictitious, though the impressions revealed are extremely vivid. It is common knowledge that Nicolas represented Tolstoi as a child.

These memories depict to us a child somewhat different from the standard *pastiche*, one who from the outset gave the impression of genuineness and reality, for this work was the first to show us Tolstoi as he was. In it

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[1] Compare Biroukof. *Tolstoï, Vie et Oeuvres.*

the reader who has forgotten his own childhood will discover it over again.

Tolstoi corrects his views regarding the child. He is aware that in infancy the faculty of self-deception is not so great as one would think: the child is not so prone after all to regard the moon as being made of green cheese. In his games, he is not the victim of imagination:

"Seated on the ground, and, imagining we were going fishing, we began to row with all our might. Volodia folded his arms and struck an attitude which was anything but that of a fisherman. I mentioned the fact to him, but he replied that the tossing about of his arms more or less made us neither lose nor gain anything, and that we should not make any progress on that account. In spite of myself, I had to be of the same opinion."

This means that invention during a game arises far more from the child's need of activity than from a self-deluding imagination. It is noteworthy that in this respect Tolstoi agrees with another investigator into the child mind, Carl Spitteler.[1] Like him he would deliberately say: "The child is a poetical invention of those who are no longer children."

[1] *Mes premiers souvenirs.*

And yet, there must be no exaggerating, no falling back into the popular error which attributes to the child point of view appertaining to the adult. I agree that the child does not deceive himself to this extent. For him, however, the border line between the possible and the impossible is still but imperfectly traced by experience. For instance, Nicolas, having come into possession of a blue crayon, makes sketches representing blue dogs, a blue boy and a blue horse, but hesitates when about to draw a blue hare and proceeds to his father's study to ask him if such hares actually exist.

These "enfantillages"—for we regard such unaffected simplicity as characteristic of the child—do not prevent their author from being an acute interpreter of human words and actions.

"Who has failed to note those mute and mysterious relations which manifest themselves in an imperceptible smile, in the movements or the looks of persons who are always together . . . . . . especially when they are not absolutely sincere with one another? How many unexpressed desires and thoughts, for fear they should be understood, are shown by a single chance look, when eyes meet one

another timidly and unsteadily!"[1] Now, the child, more than any one else, understands this language. It is the one original language, prior to speech by word of mouth, and it is natural enough that he should be nearer to it than we are.[2]

Going beyond words, he interprets gestures—which reveal more than do words—and will not let himself be deceived. Sonitchka, the girl friend of Nicolas, begs her mother to stay another half hour at the party where she is enjoying herself.

"Will you be satisfied if I am ill to-morrow?" asked Madame Valakhina, *with an imprudent smile.*

"Ah! You have promised! We may stay!" exclaimed Sonitchka, leaping with joy.

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Another thing we fail to understand in the child is his capacity for suffering. Like

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[1]*Boyhood* (sequel to *Childhood*).

[2]Probably the human being gradually weans himself from this primitive language and from the understanding of it as a result of that same appeal of practical life which diverts him from the interior life to one of action, and from the past to the future. Speech is more convenient, more precise, better adapted to external objects. But dumb show, gestures and looks, were a more spontaneous and a more adequate expression of the emotions.

George Eliot, like Disraeli, Spitteler and Romain Rolland, Tolstoi is well aware that to call childhood a "happy age" is frequently no more than cruel irony.

But imperfectly do we understand a child's tears when we are too intent upon seeking for some physical pain or other as their cause. Indeed, the child is extremely sensitive to moral suffering. Here is a little boy whose school-fellows bully him cruelly by forcing him to attempt feats of strength and skill that are beyond his ability. All take pleasure in heaping ridicule upon him. Little Nicolas is present at the scene:

"I did not understand that the wretched boy was crying less because of the physical pain than at the thought that five children, whom he probably liked on the whole, had all made up their minds to detest him and cause him to suffer, and that for no reason at all."

He did not understand it at first, sharing as he did in the ill-natured frenzy of the others. But he understood afterwards and was sorry in consequence.

This was because he knew in himself what moral torture and mortal anguish meant. He suffers a regular martyrdom when he hands his first short poem to his grandmother.

He is sorry he wrote the last line which, he imagines, reveals him as perfectly heartless. Thereupon he interprets all his grandmother's gestures, while she is reading, as signs of dissatisfaction and indignation. What a time of anguish!

This happy age is also not ignorant of the meaning of despair, the counterpart of its happiness. The child lives, far more than we do, in the present. The past is a dream, and the future is not yet. This faculty—which shows that he is akin to the *mens momentanea* of Leibniz, to the atom which is without memory and future alike and knows nothing but the present—enables him speedily to forget suffering; on the other hand, when suffering is present, he is wholly engrossed in it and less capable of comforting himself than we are with the hope of better times. Carl Spitteler tells us of the distress of a little child, one cloudy day of rain, at the thought that the sun will never come back. This reminds me of a lullaby by the German poet César Flaischlen, entitled: To a child.

Be not sad,
Be not sad,
It's but to-day
The sky's o'ercast,
It's but to-day
Things look so dull:
To-morrow you'll see the sun shining so bright.

For the moment, the child is caught as in a vice; it often seems to him that there is no escape from suffering.

At a ball, Nicolas becomes confused in the middle of a dance and is filled with despair!

"O God! why dost thou punish me in this fashion! . . . . . Everybody scorns me; they will always scorn me . . . . . . The door is for ever shut against me; friendship, love, honour, all is lost! Why did Volodia make signs to me which meant nothing, though everyone noticed them? Why did that terrible princess look at my feet? Why did Sonitchka—she is a very nice girl—but why did she smile just at that moment?"

As he journeys along the stream of memory, Tolstoi describes the successive forms of moral suffering in the growing child. Life has innumerable windings and turns which he soon discovers; there is scarcely one of them that does not cause him to suffer. Leaving the country for the town marks the beginning of a new life, the irremediable end of something dear and cherished, and it is quite a trifling detail that reveals to the child his irreparable loss:

"The first Sunday, Mimi came down to

dinner in such a grand dress and with so many ribbons on her head, that it was easy to see we were no longer in the country and that everything would now be quite different."

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The child has a pride, a self-love of his own; and the least thing is capable of wounding it. He is extraordinarily sensitive. Nicolas has just upset the jug of water on to the tablecloth. Natalia, the old servant, rubs his face with the wet part, and, to drive the lesson into his head, says again and again: "Don't thou soil the tablecloth, don't thou soil the tablecloth." Nicolas is very indignant:

"What! Natalia Savichna (as a rule she was simply Natalia) says 'thou' to me and actually rubs my face with the wet tablecloth as though I were the son of a serf! Horrible!"

Often is there a struggle for mastery between love and amour propre. Fortunately love, the craving for expansion and tenderness is so strong in the child that it generally wins in the end. As he grows up, victory is more difficult. Nicolas has just

quarrelled with his brother. The latter holds out his hand, but in spite of his keen desire to grasp it, Nicolas insists on refusing —through sheer pride. Finally love gains the victory, there is a flood of tears, and "he feels relieved." [1]

In the majority of adults, self-love would have proved victorious: to give in would have been meanness. And in this struggle between amour propre and love, there is nothing more disastrous for a child than the desire to imitate grown-up people, who have drifted away from the true springs of life. This desire kills all outbursts of true affection.

"Strange! Why, as a child, did I try to be like the grown-ups, and, now that I am myself grown up, why have I so often had a desire to be like a child? How many times, in my relations with Serioja, did this desire not to seem a child check the feeling that was on the point of manifesting itself and compel me to be a hypocrite? Not only did I not dare to kiss him—as I sometimes strongly desired to do—but I had not even the courage to take him by the hand, and tell him how glad I was to see him. . . . . . Each indica-

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[1] *Youth.*

tion of sensibility was a sign of childishness."

And after all, this mock-modesty has yet another cause. Human love is related to sex love; the origins or roots of both are blended in the inmost depths of the individual; unconsciously the child feels this in an embarrassed sort of way, and the same mock-modesty would gladly conceal both alike. For Nicolas distinctly remembers that the awakening of sentiment dates back, not merely to adolescence, but to childhood:

"I remember that when Volodia, Stephen and myself were conversing in a part of the room from which it was possible to see Sonitchka and she could also see and hear us, I was quite eager to speak, and when I happened to say something droll or audacious. I raised my voice and looked in the direction of the drawing-room door. But if we were in a place where it was impossible either to see or hear from the drawing-room, I said not a word, nor did I take any further interest in the conversation."

Still, though the child, as he grows older, tends more and more to repress his spontaneous outbursts and, for various reasons, to feel somewhat ashamed, the early years are none the less the age of love and tenderness,

of an irretrievable tenderness. The whole of *Childhood* is impregnated with an atmosphere of warm affection, tears of emotion and undying love. One feels that Tolstoi looks back on those days with fond regret.

"Innocence, heedlessness, the need of loving, a childlike faith: will all this ever again be mine? What period can be superior to that in which the two best virtues—innocent joy and the boundless impulse to love—are the sole springs of life?"

Adolescence, nearer to us than childhood, generally leaves behind clearer memories of things and events. Make no mistake, however, these memories also we refer to our present state, instead of living them over again along with the feelings that inspired us at the time. In addition, puberty is an age of repression, wherein man experiences many feelings which he will not acknowledge to himself and which he succeeds in erasing from his memory, to a greater or a less degree.

Pitilessly does Tolstoi lay bare the worst instincts that slumber within us all, torturing us throughout that age—the "thankless age" which follows close on the heels of the "happy age":

"I have read somewhere that children from twelve to fourteen years of age, i.e., during the transient stage of adolescence, are strongly inclined towards arson or even murder. Looking back over my own youth, and especially remembering the state of mind in which I found myself on that disastrous day (a day when he had reasons for uttering further maledictions upon that detestable Saint Jerome), I can well understand the possibility of the most abominable crime being committed, without any object, without even the desire to injure, but just *comme ça*, from curiosity and the unconscious urge to action. At certain moments, the future appears before a man under so gloomy an aspect that he fears, should he allow himself to dwell on it, lest his mental activity cease altogether, and he try to convince himself that there will be no future and that there is no past. At those moments when thought does not dispute beforehand each impulse of the will and when the instincts of the flesh remain the only spring of life, I can well understand why a child who, through inexperience, is more particularly inclined towards such a mental condition, without the slightest hesitation or fear, and with a smile of curiosity, might set

fire to his own house, in which his father, mother and brothers, whom he tenderly loves, are lying asleep."[1]

During adolescence, moral relations of a new kind become established between the youth of both sexes. A radically separate education accentuates the embarrassment and mysteriousness, the unfathomable depths that divide them. They evade the difficulty by despising what they do not understand.

For, as Tolstoi explains, in a group of persons who live together, sharing work and recreation alike, there is set up a special kind of "understanding," which has a jargon and a slang of its own, which remains without meaning to the uninitiated. By an implicit agreement there is fixed a suitable standard for the expression of feelings; and where a mere hint is sufficient for mutual comprehension, too strict an insistence would seem to be in doubtful taste. Quite a code of language and manners is created.

"Little girls had not our power of understanding: it was this that constituted the main cause of our moral disunion and of the disdain we felt for them.

Maybe they had *an understanding of their*

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[1]*Boyhood.*

own, but it corresponded so slightly with ours, that what we regarded as a mere phrase they looked upon as feeling; what to us was irony was truth to them, etc. At the time, however, I did not see that they were in any way to be blamed, and that this lack of understanding did not prevent them from being very nice and intelligent girls; and so I despised them."[1]

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There is a group of memories, however, of considerable interest, in which Tolstoi deals with his own education, his masters and their methods. With the keenness of perception so characteristic of him, he tells us how his child soul reacted to the education it received. It is by this that he judges his education; he knows quite well when the master, in misunderstanding him, reaches the very opposite of the end he has in view.

The old tutor of his early years, Feodor Ivanovitch—of whom we possess a striking portrait in *Childhood* under the name of Karl Ivanovitch[2]—was a good honest man, fond of children, one who did not ride principles

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[1] *Youth*—sequel to *Boyhood*.
[2] Compare Biroukof: *Tolstoï, vie et œuvres.*

to death; he appears to have had the learning and mentality of a good country schoolmaster. His influence was decisive on the mind and life of the future great man who was affectionately devoted to him. Tolstoi was only eighteen months old when his mother died, and the recollection of his father was more or less of a shadowy nature. Feodor Ivanovitch was a father—and almost a mother—to him.

Nicolas again meets his old tutor, who one morning comes to tickle the child's feet in bed. At first this vexes Nicolas, and he is angry with the old man. But soon this feeling brings remorse in its train, tenderness returns and surges up within his breast:

"I did not understand how, a minute before, I could not have liked Karl Ivanovitch, and how I regarded his dressing-gown and tasseled cap as frightfully ugly. On the contrary, all this now seemed delightful to me, even the tassel was a clear proof of his kindness."

Separation from his good-natured master was very painful to Nicolas. Sad and ironical are the words which Tolstoi puts into the mouth of the old man:—

"The children have grown up, it is time for

them to start work in earnest. As though they were learning nothing here!"

And the new tutor comes along—Saint Thomas, who is called Saint Jerome in *Childhood*—with methods that are more scientific, but he meets with no sympathy from his pupil because he has taken the place of the dear old man, a fact which, a priori, neutralizes the good effect of his methods.

"I could not attribute to Saint Jerome any other aim in life than a desire to punish me."[1]

Besides, this methodical person does not know how to deal with the child. The schoolmaster should be a man, and his mind should remain on an equality of understanding with that of the child. Anything resembling officialism, anything stiff and formal, solemn and rigid in the schoolmaster's attitude, has no other result than to check the spontaneity of the child. The schoolmaster thinks he thereby commands awe and respect, making himself feared. Rather does he make himself detested. The child, a good judge of actions and gestures, speedily discovers how much of affectation and

[1]*Youth.*

hypocrisy there is at the bottom in these ways of doing things.

"The schoolmaster slowly placed his hat on the window-sill and the copybooks on the table, raised with both hands his coat tails (as though this were quite necessary) and with a sigh sat down in his place."

Saint Jerome goes through his task as if it were a mission: he likes this educational work, though in abstract fashion, but he has no love for children of flesh and blood: of this Nicolas is made aware by reason of his imperturbable frigidity of demeanour.

He makes use of the rod and the dark room. This latter leaves behind in Nicolas a terrible memory, one of despair, the feeling—so familiar to a child, though in the present case carried to extreme limits—that all is lost, that the harm done can never be repaired. The whole of the future is as black as the dark room itself:

"I did not weep, but something heavy as stone weighed on my heart. Thoughts and images, with ever-increasing rapidity, flitted across my troubled imagination; but the recollection of the misfortune that had befallen me incessantly broke in upon the capricious chain of my reflections, and once more

I relapsed into an endless labyrinth, into uncertainty regarding the fate in store for me, into a condition of despair and dread."

Such memories as these form decisive experiences which, without further appeal, condemn the system of violence, and cause Tolstoi to attach the utmost importance in child education to the master's personality, not to his methods; to his love, not to his scientific attainments. It may be that these reasons are very subjective? But then, is it not subjectively, through our own memory, that we are able to sum up the inner life of the child, and account for the real effect made upon him by men and things?

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Once more then does Nicolas implicitly, and without comment, formulate a condemnation of the educational methods and principles brought to bear upon him at the time. He looks upon the hazards and chances of examinations as unjust, and the sense of this injustice is something so depressing that the very principle of a mode of instruction which regards examination as its object and raison d'être, seems disastrous, for that reason alone:

"This injustice produced such an impression on me, that had I been free to act as I pleased, I should never have entered for the examination again. I lost all ambition—I had no longer to reflect that I was third—and went through the remaining tests quite carelessly and without the slightest trace of emotion. All the same, I had an average of a little over four, but this interested me no longer. I convinced myself as earnestly as I could that it was extremely stupid and very bad form to try to be first. . . . . ."

Such a system of instruction is wrong, not only from a practical standpoint, but even more so from a moral one.

From the moral point of view, indeed, there is much more to say regarding the ordinary education of the youth of the upper classes. Both sexes are encouraged to prefer the appearance of things to their reality. Culture and knowledge are not set up as desirable in themselves, young people are required to look upon them as means of success in life and society. The striking contrast between being and appearing offends Nicolas when he remembers his pianoforte lessons.

[1]*Youth.*

"Suddenly I made up my mind that I was fond of German classical music, and I went into ecstasies when Lubotchka played the Sonata Pathétique, although, to tell the truth, this sonata bored me beyond measure. I myself began to play Beethoven, pronouncing the word Be—e—e—ethoven. Behind all this pretence and artful manœuvring—as I now remember to have been the case—there was yet within me some approach to talent, for music would frequently impress me greatly, even to the point of weeping. I was able, without having the score in front of me, to reproduce on the piano any piece that caught my fancy; and really, if any one at that time had taught me to regard music as an independent pleasure and an end in itself, not as a means of delighting young ladies by the agility and the sentimentality of my playing, it is quite possible I might have become a good performer."

It was not in music alone that Nicolas had been induced to prefer appearance to reality. All his moral conceptions were confused by the superstition of the 'comme il faut.' He regarded men as divided into the 'comme il faut' and the 'non comme il faut.' The former were distinguished by their faultless

way of speaking French, by long, clean and well-trimmed finger nails, by a superior sort of indifference and "an expression of elegant and contemptuous ennui." A harmonious combination of footwear and trowsers was an infallible sign of the 'comme il faut.'

"I am dismayed when I reflect how much precious time I lost, the cream of the life of a youth of sixteen, in acquiring this accomplishment."

Such a superstition in the young man may be permanently disastrous:

"At a certain period of youth, after more or less of an irregular life, a man generally becomes smitten with the idea of taking an active part in social life, chooses work of one kind or another, and devotes himself to it heart and soul. In the case of a man 'comme il faut' however, this seldom happens; I have known and still know many proud and ambitious old men, very strict and critical, who, if they were to be asked in the next world such questions as: "Who are you? What did you do on earth?" would be able to give no better answer than: "I was a man 'très comme il faut.'"

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Thus reflecting on the memories of his early days, Tolstoi, with unerring acumen, lays bare before our eyes the utterly *false* character of our education.

It is wrong in the first place, because it does not consider how profound is the child nature, between which and our idea of it there is a ghastly discrepancy. Again, it is wrong because we are hypocrites with regard to the child, whom we cannot make our dupe, because we insist on overawing him by a sort of charlatanry in our attitude towards him: a state of things which has no other effect than to repel him. And lastly, it is wrong because its object is not to prepare a human being for real life, a life which is of value on its own account, but rather for an artificial life which regards "seeming" as superior to "being." From beginning to end, there is a false ring about it. It is a striking denial of the noble motto which Rousseau borrowed from Juvenal: Vitam impendere vero—to make truth the rule of life—a motto which Tolstoi in turn might well have borrowed from his master Rousseau.

CHAPTER III

THE CHILD AS SEEN BY TOLSTOI

Tolstoi is a good judge of the child soul. Adown the memories of his own childhood, he observes the child both in his life out of doors and in school—that school which itself is no more than a fragment of life. It is thus that Tolstoi acquires his vision into the child nature. We find this vision depicted in his novels; the two great works *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, as well as other stories, abound in child types and child portraits. These sketches are by a master hand; nowhere does Tolstoi reveal himself as a truer psychologist. In his novels, the child is no mere figurant, a part of the background, he is an object of study for his own sake. In presence of these sketches, we need not linger over the thankless—perhaps the chimerical—task of trying to discover what has been borrowed from the memories of his own childhood, then from his observation of the child in life, and afterwards from studying the child at school. We need but remember that all these streams flow in one direction, and more especially that the part played by

school life must not be neglected. *War and Peace* was written after the first period of Tolstoi's educational activity, *Anna Karenina* after the second. Nor can it be questioned that the teacher came to the aid of the artist.

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One thing that both astonishes and amuses Tolstoi is a lack of understanding of the child on the part of the adult. Parents—especially mothers—cherish the fond illusion that they know their children. And when the child is growing up, in the course of his rapid evolution, no attempt is made to correct the stereotyped vision we obtain of him. We make of the child—of our own children—an image which we affirm to be a true likeness, an image which we refuse to abandon.

In *War and Peace*, Countess Rostov may be taken as an example of this illusion—a very human and maternal illusion, after all:

"Up to the present, thank Heaven, I have been my children's friend, and they have wholly confided in me," said the countess, thus perpetuating the error made by so many parents who imagine that their children keep no secrets from them. "I know I shall

always be the first in whom my daughters will confide. . . . ."

For those who follow the development of the countess's children, there is something almost comical about this assurance of hers.

Natacha, her daughter, whose life we will follow previous to her marriage and motherhood, is one of Tolstoi's most living creations. She represents life in swift development, that proteiform life of whose elusive character Countess Rostov has not the faintest suspicion. We see the formation of a soul going on, day by day.

When we first make her acquaintance, she is very childish, playing with her dolls. There is about her a sensitiveness which the adult, in his impenitent blundering, is continually wounding without ever suspecting the fact. She insists on her doll being taken seriously.

The lady visitor, compelled to witness this family scene, thought it polite to take part in it.

"Tell me, dear," she said to Natacha, "What relation do you hold to this Mimi? I suppose she is your daughter?"

The indulgent tone of this childish question did not please Natacha at all. She fixed

her eyes seriously on the princess, and made no answer.

Adolescence is now approaching, in the portrayal of which, as an age of artifice and subtle gradations, Tolstoi excels. Natacha has now reached that uncertain age at which, as is frequently said, the child is no longer a child though not yet a woman. Tolstoi is well aware that it would be more correct to say that she is still a child though already a woman. Twilight and lurking shadows are not easy to depict, but they do not trouble the novelist.

In the soul of Natacha, everything is blended: childishness with great earnestness, play with the awakening of passion. We have before us the human heart, "an abyss of contradictions."

Natacha has just witnessed an idyllic scene between her brother Nicolas and Sonia. Without waiting any longer, she wishes to go through the same experience herself:

" "Boris, come here," she said, with a look of cunning and importance, "I have something to tell you. Here, here."

She led the way into the hothouse, among the boxes, to the spot where, a short time previously, she had been concealed. Boris smilingly followed her.

"What is it?" he asked.

She became perplexed, looked all round, and seeing her doll lying on a box, picked it up and placed it in his hands:

"Kiss the doll," she said."

Following on this evasion, as Boris does not kiss the doll, she asks him straight out if he will be good enough to kiss herself. Boris makes the usual declaration, but he is prudent enough not to ask for Natacha's hand in marriage until four years have elapsed. She thinks of her age—twelve years—and, becoming as pensive as a young woman, counts on her fingers, as would a child:

"Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen."

Shortly afterwards followed the declaration of war. Natacha would like to profit by the gravity of the situation—a gravity which she well understands—to effect the condonation of a serious freak, which, in any other circumstance would meet with due reprimand, though this time, she feels sure, it will be condoned, for people's minds are engaged upon more important matters than the scolding of a child.

"Mamma, what cake will there be?"

Her clear voice rings out, whilst the guests

are engaged in discussion, and, in spite of the warning finger of the governess, she repeats her question until they listen to her. Besides, she had made a wager on the point with her little brother, and he was forced to give heed to Natacha's audacity. But behind this wager there is something else, something like the artist's desire to paint the town red, to astonish the natives. Here the "natives" correspond to stupid parents—parents who understand nothing about the matter. Natacha has made up her mind to cause a scandal. Seeing that she is so persistently looked down upon and regarded as a negligible factor, she is determined both to seek her revenge and to take advantage of the situation: to seek her revenge by raising a scandal and delighting in the horrified mien of the governess, but also to profit by the mistake these good people have made in regarding her as a silly child (what a godsend!), and carefully to preserve her mask of roguery so as to be free to live in secret her real inner life, so little known to the rest.

And this same Natacha, who takes pleasure in mischievous freaks in the presence of her parents and people generally, is in dead earnest when talking with a girl of her own

age who understands her. The young men to whom they have given a promise of marriage are leaving for the army. The girls are quite aware of the seriousness of the situation; they sob and weep in each other's arms. All the same, Natacha remains the little frolicsome child, still passing through the "happy age" when nothing is taken seriously. And the countess is quite certain she knows all her daughter's most secret thoughts.

Besides, to regard her as serious would be just as erroneous as to think her a little mischief maker. She is an indescribable blend of mischievousness and earnestness. After a few tears, she is quite delighted at the attempt to carry off with éclat her first successes in society, in doing which she plays at being a lady, and that very seriously. She is now quite aware that she is grown up, discovering the delights and happiness to be obtained from coquetry; like a child at play, she thinks of nothing else; only that which now fills her mind is anything but a child's game, and yet she gives her whole attention to it, just as though it were!

"Natacha was completely happy. She was dancing with some one of importance who

had recently come from abroad. Everybody was noticing her and she was conversing with him as though she were a woman. In her hand was a fan which some young lady had given her to hold, and, assuming the most frivolous pose—Heaven alone knows where and when she learnt it!—she smilingly toyed with her fan as she chatted with her partner.

"Just look at her . . . look at her," said the countess, crossing the room and glancing at Natacha, who replied with a blush and a laugh.

"Well, mamma, what are you amused at? Do you notice anything unusal?" In speaking thus, she evidently again feels that she is "astonishing" the natives, and desires to do it; she takes malicious pleasure in filling with amazement her mother who thinks she knows her so well and regards her as just a simple-minded child.

A child assuredly she is, though not simple-minded. She is in unstable equilibrium between two ages, two mental states. She has not forgotten the child mind, as the adult has; and even now preoccupied with her success as a young woman, she still retains painful recollections of her despair as a child:—

"Ah! I know, I know!" replied Natacha. "That happened to me when I was quite a little girl. You remember once when I had been punished for taking plums, and you were all dancing whilst I was sobbing my heart out in the class-room. Never shall I forget it. I felt sad and I pitied everybody, myself along with the rest, especially as I had not taken the plums."

The whole of this complicated situation, so difficult to analyse, comes to life in Tolstoi's account of it. No longer is it a piece of mechanism, made up of a thousand pieces which fit into one another more or less satisfactorily; it is a living organism which works with sovereign ease and freedom. This disconcerting Natacha, who eludes and mocks us, whose very soul plays hide-and-seek and then suddenly reveals its secret and perturbed depths, is one of Tolstoi's materpieces.

Another type, even more of a child, and finely drawn, is Petia, Natacha's little brother.

News comes that Nicolas, the elder brother, is wounded and has been made an officer. The girls weep. Petia, however, is determined to play the man.

"There now, any one can see what whining

creatures all you women are," said Petia, as he paced the room with long firm strides. "For my part, I am very pleased, yes, very pleased that my brother has distinguished himself. Whereas you? . . . you do nothing but cry your eyes out without understanding the meaning of it all. . . . .

"If I were in Nikolenka's place I would kill even more Frenchmen," he said. "What cowards they are! I would kill so many that I would make a mountain of them." continued Petia.

"Hold your tongue, Petia, you're a fool!"

"It's not I who am a fool; it's those who whine and cry over stupid nonsense," said Petia."

However, child though he be—a child who would generally be represented with a paper hat and a wooden sword—Petia is not the stiff unbending academical sort of child. He is alike shrewd and complex. He pretends he does not understand the feelings of girls; all the same, he does not fail to remark on their idylls. Here appears the "enfant terrible":

"Well, anyhow, I know why she was ashamed . . . . . Because she was in love with that big fellow who wears glasses . . . . . Now

she is in love with this singer . . . . . And so she's ashamed."

"Petia, you're a fool," said Natacha.

"No more of a fool than you are, little mother," replied Petia, a boy of nine, with the assurance of an old trooper."

In *War and Peace* there are certain well-known passages which deal with the mystery and drama of death, in connection with the passing of Prince André. The one thing that emphasizes this tragic picture, and increases its importance from the human point of view, is the child in the presence of death. At first he is disconcerted, but as is usual with little ones, he assumes the attitude of an adult:

"When Nicolas was brought close to Prince André, a look of terror spread over his face, but he did not weep, for no one else was weeping. Prince André kissed him, but did not know what to say to him."

By degrees, however, he adapts himself to the strange atmosphere, his sensitive intuitive nature fully responding to it. He strikes a note of unwonted gravity, feels something that mere words cannot express and is desirous of showing that he understands. This he does with the tact of one who divines

things intuitively . . . . for he guesses more than he understands. And this makes the mystery all the more poignant for him.

"Prince André's son was seven years of age. He was only just beginning to read, and knew nothing at all. From that day, he learnt a great deal from study, observation and experience, but even if he had at the time known all that he became acquainted with later, he could not have understood better or put to greater profit the scene between his father, Princess Marie and Natacha.

He understood all, left the sick-room without a tear, then silently approached Natacha who had followed him, timidly raised his beautiful pensive eyes to her face, his upper lip slightly quivering. He leaned his head on her shoulder and began to weep.

From that day onward, he either remained sitting alone or timidly approached Princess Marie and Natacha whom he appeared to love even more than his aunt."

Thus we see that no situation is too lofty or sublime for the child. His presence does not even clash with death and the tremendous and thrilling problems of the life beyond. He does not understand things as we do; nor

has he the same way of expressing wonder or emotion. All the same, he is vaguely moved and troubled by the uncertainty of the future.

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There is also much to be gleaned from the pages of *Anna Karenina.* Here and there we find brief allusions which emphasize some characteristic of the child soul upon which Tolstoi loves to dwell.

Now we have that capacity for moral suffering, which we misinterpret when we imagine that tears have some more worldly or material cause:

"Grisha began to weep, alleging that Nicolas too had whistled though he alone had been punished, and that the reason he was crying was the injustice of the English lady, not the fact that he had been deprived of tart."

Then again we have the intuition of the child, who is not the dupe of special attitudes or petty insincerities, and, *a fortiori*, cannot be deceived by an habitually hypocritical character, but rather divines the presence of sincere love and welcomes it.

"Children are often scolded for not being pleasant with grown-up people; the fact is

that the least intelligent child is never the dupe of hypocrisy which occasionally deceives the most acute and far-seeing man; his instinct proves an infallible guide. Now, whatever fault might have been found with Levine, he could not be accused of insincerity; the result was that the children shared the kind feelings towards him which were expressed by the looks of their mother. The two elder boys accepted his invitation, and ran about with him just as they did with their nurse, their mother, or Miss Hull. Lili also wanted to go to him, he lifted her up on to his shoulder and began running. . ."

We know that this Levine was Tolstoi himself; children liked him because he liked them; they accorded him that spontaneous homage which inspired Victor Hugo to say:

Et je ne sais pourquoi
Tous les petits enfants viennent autour de moi.

The child notices every shade of feeling we entertain regarding him. Just as he divines love, so he divines love's restrictions, even though an attempt be made to conceal them beneath the most affectionate actions and gestures.

" "What is mother doing?" he asked, pas-

sing his hand over his daughter's little white delicate neck—"Good morning," he said, smiling at his little boy who came up in his turn. He well knew that he loved his son less than his daughter, and so he always tried to hide the fact, but the child understood the difference, and made no response to his father's forced smile."

But apart from these incidental sketches, on which Tolstoi frequently digresses, *Anna Karenina* offers us one more child study, forcefully and minutely depicted: Sergius, the son of Anna.

This child is growing up in an abnormal, strained and unstable environment. There is no longer any strong mutual tie between his father and mother, and so he finds himself, alone between the two, quietly observant.

He notices how mysterious and anomalous are certain situations. In the presence of Wronsky, his mother's lover, he experiences a strange uneasiness; there is here something suspicious, a sort of artificial light which hurts his eyes and makes him blink.

"The child seemed to understand by instinct that between this man and his mother there was a serious tie which he could not fathom.

Indeed, Sergius tried ineffectually to find out how he ought to behave towards this gentleman; with the intuition peculiar to a child, he had guessed that his father, the governess and the maid regarded him with horror, whereas his mother treated him as her best friend.

"What does this mean? Who is he? Ought I to like him? And is it my fault if I do not understand things? Am I naughty and stupid?" Such questions as these came into the mind of the child. Hence his bashfulness, his questioning, mistrustful attitude, and that changeableness of temper which so greatly distressed Wronsky."

He spontaneously sets up for a judge of the disharmony he feels in his environment. Not a single weak spot or defect in his father's armour eludes him.

"Although he had frequently told Sergius that every Christian should be thoroughly well acquainted with the Old Testament, he often needed to consult the text for his lessons: a fact which the child did not fail to notice."

Jealously does he defend the sanctuary of his soul against the complex, abnormal and artificial society in which he lives. His mother has suddenly left home, but he has not

clearly understood the reason of this, though quite aware that they do not tell him the truth of the matter. Then he withdraws into the shrine of his own thoughts and will no longer allow indifferent persons to allude to the memory—so sacred to him—of his mother:

"Leave me; why cannot they leave me alone? What can it matter to them whether I remember or forget?"

Sergius, as a type, also offers us a living criticism of the prevailing mode of education.

The silent process going on in the child's soul is utterly unknown to his master. One day, the child has not prepared his lesson; his mind being so taken up with good resolutions for the future. The master can see nothing but the lesson that has not been learnt; he does not understand that, at bottom, the reason is rather a laudable than a blameworthy one:

"The child's meditations were of the most varied nature; he imagined that his father might still perhaps have the orders of Vladimir and Saint Andrew conferred upon him, and that in consequence he would be much more indulgent regarding the day's lesson; then he reflected that, when he grew

up, he would act in such a way as to deserve every possible decoration, even the orders that might be invented superior to that of Saint Andrew. No sooner would a new order be instituted than he would straightway prove himself worthy of it.

These reflections caused the hours to pass so speedily that when lesson time came round, the master seemed not merely discontented, but even distressed."

In another part of the book, we have a direct criticism which the child's good sense vaguely formulates against the dull lifeless education inflicted upon him . . . . . an education that in no way responds to his real needs:

"Sergius looked attentively at his teacher, examined his scanty beard, his glasses reposing almost on the tip of his nose, and fell into a brown study, with the result that he heard nothing of the rest of the lesson. Could his master believe what he said? From the tone in which he spoke, that seemed impossible.

Why are they all of one mind in telling me, in exactly the same way, the most useless and uninteresting things? Why does this man turn away from me? Why does he not

love me?" asked the child, without finding an answer to his questions."

On another occasion, his father reprimands him in deliberately solemn accents. Sergius remarks this artificial attitude, and, obedient to the dictates of spontaneous imitation, he becomes artificial himself:

"The gay shining eyes of Sergius grew dim before his father's gaze. He felt that the latter, when addressing him, had adopted a peculiar tone of voice, as though he were addressing one of those imaginary children to be found in books . . . . . children whom Sergius did not resemble in the slightest. He was accustomed to this, and did his best to feign some analogy with such exemplary little boys.

"I hope you understand me?" asked his father.

"Yes, papa," replied the child, acting up to his assumed character."

Here we have an intelligent and very psychological criticism of our rigid cut-and-dried attitude regarding the child. In his turn, the child becomes rigid by a process of contagion. The relations between master and pupil continue in an imaginary world, in which both endeavour not to be themselves,

but rather something official. And unknowingly they proceed along the bank of the stream of life, taking good care not to stumble and fall in. By such methods, instruction does not truly instruct, for it has not directed life aright—and so life, on its own account and in obedience to no other law than its own, undertakes to do the good work itself:

"Indeed, Sergius worked badly; all the same, he was not an ill-endowed child, on the contrary, he was far superior to those his master set up as an example for him. The reason why he would not learn what was taught him was because he was unable to do so, seeing that his soul had very different needs from those his masters took for granted. At the age of nine, he was no more than a child; still he was acquainted with his own nature and defended it against those who would have liked to solve its secrets without applying the key of love. He was blamed because he would not learn anything, and yet he was burning with the desire for knowledge, though his teachers were Kapitonitch, his old nurse, Nadinka and Wassili Loukitch."

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Tolstoi knows the child soul by a sort of intuitive divination. And this divination, so manifest in his novels, is seen even more in his life as a paterfamilias.

In his souvenirs, his son Elie[1] gives us some astonishing proofs of this:

"Scarcely ever does he punish us, but he looks straight into my eyes. He knows all I think, and I do not feel at all comfortable.

"I can lie to mother, but not to father; for he will find out everything. Not one of us ever tells him a lie."

This power of psychological divination possessed by Tolstoi occasionally even glimpses the future. His son quotes a letter in which Tolstoi describes his children, at that time quite young, and attempts to predict their disposition and character:

"Marie, the fifth, two years of age; the babe following on whose birth Sonia almost died. A sickly weak child, with body white as milk, light curly hair, great blue eyes of a strangely profound and serious expression. Very intelligent and ill-favoured; she will be a puzzle when she grows up. She will suffer, will seek and find nothing, ever

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[1] Count Elie Tolstoi. *Tolstoi, souvenirs d'un de ses fils.* Calmann Lévy, Paris.

looking for what is most impossible to obtain."

Thus does Tolstoi, out of all his children, indicate this wretched-looking child of two as destined to inherit that unassuaged moral torture he feels within himself; as it happened, his prophecy came true, reminding one of the predictions of fairies who peep into cradles in nursery-tale books.

This letter was written in 1872. A few years later, the moral crisis which had long been brooding in Tolstoi's soul burst forth. His son relates the following:

"The first member of our family who most closely resembled father was my sister Macha (Maria), who has since died.

In 1885 she was fifteen years of age, light-complexioned, slight in build and rather tall. Physically she reminded us of mother though her face was somewhat like father's, with the same prominent cheekbones, the same light blue eyes. Gentle and modest, she gave the impression of being of a retiring disposition.

In her inmost soul, she felt the isolation of her father, and, abandoning the society of her friends, she passed quietly, though decisively, over to his side."

Elie Tolstoi also relates a curious detail regarding Natacha, one of the characters in *War and Peace*:

"As regards type, Aunt Tania reminded one greatly of Natacha Rostov, though my impression—after reading *War and Peace*—was that my sister Tania, aged sixteen, resembled her far more than did my aunt. I was amazed to think that my father had written his book when Tania was quite a child, and had foretold her character so exactly."

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Thus does Tolstoi enter into the very soul of the child. His power of divination steps beyond the present into the future, grasping all that is apprehensible in the determinism of a soul. He deciphers the hieroglyph of that personal destiny which is inseparable from a child. Such is the extraordinary gift of intuition which, above all else, enables Tolstoi to be the teacher and educator he is.

PART II

EVOLUTION

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST PERIOD.[1]

It was in 1849—at the age of twenty-one—that Tolstoi started a school. As a matter of fact, education attracted him at all times, but his busy well-filled life prevented him from devoting himself to this school. The first period during which he took an active interest in education began about his thirtieth year. It proceeded from 1858 till 1862 with an interruption in 1860 for his second journey abroad, of which mention has already been made. This was a busy and practical period when Tolstoi, with a little help given mostly by students, was himself at the head of the country school opened in the grounds of Yasnaia Poliana.

[1] The articles on education dealing with this period may be found in volume XIII. of the *Oeuvres complètes.*

This, too, was the time when, in his review *Yasnaia Poliana*, the organ of the new school, he co-ordinated his first ideas on school instruction, and inspected neighbouring schools, which were more or less modelled after his own.

As we already know, at this time metaphysical and moral preoccupations had now bent his mind in the direction of teaching. He was on the lookout for good soil upon which to build, though even here doubt assails him:

"On my return from abroad[1] I settled in the country, and occupied myself with the organization of schools for the peasantry. This occupation was especially pleasing to me, because it was free from the spirit of falsity and deception so manifest in the career of a literary teacher.

Here again I acted in the name of progress, but this time I regarded progress in a critical spirit. I said to myself that progress was often attempted in an irrational manner, and that it was necessary to leave a primitive people and the children of peasants perfectly free to choose the path of progress

[1]This refers to the first journey, not that of 1860, one devoted to the study of foreign schools.

they thought best. In reality I was still bent on the solution of the same impossible problem—how to teach, without knowing what I had to teach."[1]

We can well understand the importance of this state of disturbance and uncertainty. It is largely the cause of the effacement of Tolstoi before nature and the child's personality. Not knowing what to do, he leaves things alone.

Only that education appears to him fully justified which is grounded on belief in a revealed religion; here, there is no possible doubt as to what it is right to teach, for we have certitude to guide us. Philosophy, like religion, regards school instruction as being derived from general knowledge about the world, life and human destiny. Such knowledge, however, is not to be trusted. Philosophers, not being agreed among themselves, have no right to invoke or claim authority for their system in order to impose a certain form of instruction on the human race. Like Plato, all philosophers look upon instruction as having both its object and its foundation in morals, which itself is more or less deduced from metaphysics. This latter,

[1] *My Confession.*

however, is very uncertain and deceptive. So it is the very foundation that is at fault.[1]

One schoolmistress imagines that the entire perfection of human nature consists in the art of making a correct bow, of wearing collars and speaking French; she confesses that she is a martyr to her duty, for, incapable as she is of eliminating the too familiar influence of the children's parents, she is well aware that all her pains and trouble are of no avail.[2] We are all more or less like this schoolmistress; that is, our ideal is too relative and too subjective; it is overweening conceit on our part to insist on imposing it on the child.

Like Descartes in philosophy, so Tolstoi in the instruction of children starts from a state of doubt—a doubt more profound than that of Descartes. In both cases, doubt is to be the spring and source of fresh certainties.

"The basis of our activity is the conviction that not only do we not know, but we are even incapable of knowing what constitutes popular instruction, that not only is there no science of instruction and teaching—pedagogy—but its very first foundations have

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[1] *Sur l'instruction publique.*
[2] *L'éducation et la culture.*

not even yet been laid. The definition of pedagogy and its aim, in the philosophic sense, is impossible, useless and mischievous . . . ."[1]

Indeed, this state of doubt gives birth to the most remarkable ideas in Tolstoi's science of teaching.

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It cannot be a question of imposing on others our ideals and conceptions, of decreeing that this or the other thing is worth learning or ought to be learnt; the more so because all conceptions, more especially that of good and evil, are incessantly evolving. One generation cannot graft what it thinks on to the next generation; life is active and working towards fruition; to-morrow is incapable of thinking like to-day; and grafting of this kind would be wholly opposed to the trend and development of life itself.

Instruction cannot be defined independently of human life. (Here we recognize the deep-rooted humanism of Tolstoi to whom anything apart from human reality is devoid of interest). Instruction is not a relationship to be established between pupil and master

[1] *Sur l'instruction publique.*

on the one hand—and an abstract ideal on the other. The relationship is direct between the master and the pupil themselves. Instruction is an *osmosis*, a word which, in my opinion, seems to express perfectly the thought of Tolstoi. Or perhaps we might say that the master and the pupil are communicating vessels which, by a law of nature, tend to reach the same level. The need of human sympathy is at the root both of instruction and of conversation. Instruction is itself a sort of conversation; it ought to be equally easy and unrestrained. When two human beings meet, they normally need to get nearer to each other and reach a common level. And seeing that the adult cannot unlearn what he already knows, the child is compelled to learn it.

"We are convinced that there is no final end or goal to instruction, any more than there is to history. Instruction—in the largest sense of the word and so including education—is, to my mind, that activity on the part of man which is based on the need of equality and the immutable law of his progress. A mother learns to speak to her child solely in order that they may come to a mutual understanding. The mother by

instinct endeavours to bring herself on to a level with the ideas of the child, with its language, but the law of progress which is obeyed by instruction does not permit her to lower herself to his level, on the contrary, it compels the child to rise to her level. There is the same relationship existing between writer and reader, between school and pupil, between government, society and people.

The activity of the teacher has the same end in view. The aim of school teaching is nothing more than the study of the conditions under which these two aspirations towards the same common end agree, and the indication of the conditions which prevent this agreement or concordance from taking place."

In short, Tolstoi, a great humanist, who looks upon an idea as valuable only in terms of the man who thinks it, simplifies the three-term relation (master, abstract ideal and pupil) which is at the root of all school teaching. Between the first term, the master, and the last, the pupil, he sets up a short-circuit. A veritable electric shock is about to be discharged between them, making them vibrate in tune with each other. The wall of

abstractions that chilled and separated them is on the point of falling to the ground.

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From another point of view, the priority of instruction over education is the result of deep-rooted moral doubt. For education, which imposes convictions, there is to be substituted what Tolstoi calls "culture."

"Education is an obligatory influence, of one person over another, with the object of moulding a man as he thinks right; culture is the free relationship between men, based not only on the need of acquiring knowledge, but also on the need of transmitting to another what has been acquired." [1]

Culture does not—cannot—exclude one form of education, that which takes place by osmosis, by the slow involuntary penetration or saturation of the personality of the adult into that of the child. Still, it excludes authoritative education, that which is based on dogmas and would tempt the child to

[1] *Sur l'instruction publique.* Also compare the answers to Markov in the article: *Le progrès et la définition de l'instruction.* Progress is a vague conception; instruction can find no foundation in it. This foundation is no more historical than it is metaphysical: it is psychological. It is "the aspiration of man towards equality of knowledge."

renounce free investigation. This is the principle which Tolstoi calls that of "the non-immixture of the school in education."

"What should the school be with non-immixture in the work of education? As we have stated above, the school implies the conscious influence of the one who instructs over the one whom he instructs. How should he act so as not to transcend the bounds of instruction, i.e., liberty? My answer is: "The school should have but one object: the transmission of the various scientific data (instruction), by endeavouring not to cross over into the moral domain of convictions, beliefs and character. Its aim should be a single one: science, not the result of its influence upon the human individual."[1]

In a word, the problem is to create, for the child, the analogue of what are, for the adult, more advanced establishments and public meetings, the object of which is to instruct without imposing dogmas regarding the conduct of human life. Now, it is easy to set up similar relationships as regards the child:

"Such are the teaching of reading and writing by schoolmates and brothers, children's games (it is my intention to write a

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[1] *L'éducation et la culture.*

special article on the educational influence of games),[1] various public spectacles, pictures and books, stories and songs, divers occupations. Such, in a word, are the attempts being made at the school of Yasnaia Poliana."[2]

Moreover, in instruction itself, the rôle of the school should not be exaggerated. Before the discovery of printing, everything—or nearly everything—was learnt at school; we are still pedantic enough to attribute to the school the exclusive importance it enjoyed in the Middle Ages, whereas now-a-days all serious instruction is acquired through books, and apart from school life.[3]

Thus does Tolstoi curtail the powers and influence of the school. To him, violence, which naturally repels him, appears a particularly monstrous thing in the unlawful act of imposing conceptions. It is on this account that both the adult and the school have to appear as far as possible in the background in favour of the child. Utterly uncertain as we are of absolute good and absolute evil, we have but to leave life to its own devices.

[1]The parenthesis is Tolstoi's own.
[2]*L'éducation et la culture.*
[3]*Sur l'éducation du peuple.*

". . . . . The difference between education and culture dwells in violence alone, which education acknowledges as a right. Education is culture by force; culture is freedom. Education is the tendency in a man to make of another human being what he is himself . . . . . . I am convinced that the educator shows such zeal for the education of the child only because he is inspired by envy at the thought of the child's purity and by the desire to make him like himself, i.e., to spoil him. . . . . . I have no wish to prove what I have already proved—too easy a matter—that education, in so far as it signifies the moulding of men after a certain pattern, is *barren illegal*[1] and *impossible.* I will confine myself to a single point. The right of giving education is non-existent. I do not recognize it, nor does the young generation now growing up—a generation in universal revolt against compulsory education—recognize it, nor will it ever do so."[2]

Life must be left to itself. Within itself are resources of which we know nothing; intervention on our part is frequently disastrous to its free development.

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[1]Doubtless we ought to read "illegitimate."
[2]*L'éducation et la culture.*

"Everywhere the influence of life is kept unaffected by the pedagogue. And everywhere the school is surrounded by the 'Chinese wall' of book wisdom."

Even in the work of instruction, what is of greatest importance is spontaneous development.[1]

On the contrary, the traditional school through its brutal methods, frequently acts as a drag on true growth and development. It brutalizes the child. Here again, Tolstoi is thinking more particularly of the school conducted after the German methods which are the most pedantic of all; he lays special

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[1]Thus it comes about that a normal child, who keenly desires it, succeeds in teaching himself quite as well as, and even better than the Government school would have taught him.

In the village school opened last month I noticed a sturdy boy of fourteen who, while the class were going over their letters, was muttering something and smiling in a very self-satisfied way. He was not entered as one of the class. On questioning him, I discovered that he knew all the letters except a few—a fact of which he was ashamed. I got him to say the syllables: he knew them well. I asked him to read: this he did without spelling, though he himself did not believe in it. "Where did you learn?" "When I was tending sheep, last summer, a companion, who knew how to read, taught me." "Have you an alphabet?" "Yes." "Who gave it you?" "I bought it." "Have you been studying long?" "A whole summer, out in the fields. He showed me how, and that was the way I learned."

On methods of teaching reading and writing.

stress on the word *verdummen* (to stupefy) "invented by the Germans," he says, "to indicate this slow distortion and perversion of the intellectual powers." [1]

A very clear proof of this fact—that the traditional school responds in no way to the vital needs of child development, to what we call nowadays the biological tendencies of the child—is afforded by the comparison any one may make between the child and the scholar:

"Watch the same child at home, in the streets and at school: now you see a creature full of life, gay and inquisitive, his eyes dancing with fun, and a smile on his lips, eager to know everything, distinctly and forcibly expressing his ideas in his own language; again you see a creature tired and confined indoors, wearing an expression of fatigue, of dread and boredom, timidly uttering foreign words in a foreign tongue, a creature whose very life, like a snail, is hidden away in its shell. [1]

Consequently, *let us intervene as discreetly as possible* and guard against scaring away or startling the life that asks only to manifest itself, let us guard against forcing the snail to draw in its horns when it would like to put

[1] *Sur l'instruction publique.*

them out. More particularly is our task a negative one: by which we do not mean that it is of none effect, far from it.

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This brings us to the subject of respect for the child's freedom. It is the direct consequence of non-immixture, of respect for life in its spontaneous development:

"I am convinced that the school should not intervene in the work of education, which depends on the family alone, that it has not the right to attribute rewards and punishments, that the best way to maintain order and carry on the school is to grant the pupils entire freedom to learn and to make their own arrangements according to their own ideas."[1]

The régime of compulsion or force is one of lies and deception. By compulsion, just as by the stiff and formal official attitude which is the fashion in school, you stereotype life and enter a world that is fundamentally wrong and false:

"As Figaro expressed it: you don't know who deceives or who is deceived. The pupils deceive the masters, the masters

[1] *L'école d'Iasnaya-Poliana en novembre et décembre.*

deceive the parents, the pupils the government, etc., in every possible manner." [1]

Freedom alone enables us to set up those true and living relations necessary to that osmosis which constitutes instruction. Freedom is the rule at Yasnaia:

"It matters little that they have nothing in their hands; neither have they anything to carry in their head. In no way are they compelled to remember to-day what they did yesterday; thoughts of the lesson to come do not trouble them. The pupil carries but himself, so to speak, his own impressionable nature and the certainty that school to-day will be as gay and pleasant as it was yesterday. He does not think of the class until it begins. Reprimands are never heard, nor are any of the children late, except occasionally the bigger ones whose fathers keep them at home for some work or other. Then the boy comes galloping up to school, all out of breath." [2]

Nor does this freedom entail any sort of disorder. It replaces an external artificial order by one that is internal, organic and genuine, one that springs from life itself, like

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[1] *L'éducation et la culture.*
[2] *L'école d'Iasnaya-Poliana.*

the regular and spontaneous working of an organism; one that is not felt as a constraint.

On one occasion, a noisy epidemic of paper crackers broke out in the school. The manuscript of some precious narration or other had been made into crackers. Tolstoi does not need to "fire his big guns" in order to discover the culprits:

"On this occasion I cannot help remarking that, solely by reason of the external disorder and the complete freedom of the pupils, without the slightest effort and employing neither ruse nor threat, I learnt all the details of the complicated story regarding the transformation of the manuscript into crackers, and their *autos-da-fe.*"[1]

Compulsion or force with a view to establishing order is a fundamental psychological error. The child, for whom instruction, the spiritual osmosis, is a vital necessity, also needs order in school and shows a tendency to set it up of his own accord. But when an attempt is made to impose it forcibly, he looks upon such violence as unjust, and rebels against it.

"It is far easier to let them calm down of themselves and restore natural order than

[1]*Qui doit enseigner l'art littéraire et à qui?*

to impose it forcibly. Given the present-day spirit in the school, it is materially impossible to check them. The louder the master shouts —a thing that *does* happen—the louder the children shout: the master's voice merely excites them more than ever." [1]

Moreover, in this excitation there is something more than a spirit of revolt; there is a suggestive influence; shouting calls forth shouting. In the "Maison des Petits" of the Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Tolstoi came across a child of six who said to his teacher:

"Yes, miss, I know, to get the little ones to be quiet you just need to make a sign, for when you shout, they shout louder still." [1]

Order freely established by the child himself, because he is aware of its necessity, is the only real order. That imposed from without is superficial and uncertain:

"Just leave the class of a district or a German school, where everything is quiet during the lesson, and give the order to continue working. Half an hour afterwards, look in at the door: the class is very lively, but the subject of their animation is not the

[1] *L'intermédiaire des éducateurs,* Geneva, 1915. *La liberté à la Maison des Petits*, by M. Audemars.

lesson; they are whiling away the time in idle dissipation. In our classes we have frequently tried this experiment; we left in the middle of the lesson, at a time when the pupils were very noisy; looking in at the door shortly afterwards we always heard them continuing their lesson, correcting and checking one another. It would often hapen that instead of taking advantage of our absence to play mischievous tricks, they were sitting perfectly quiet."[1]

This state of order, born of the very need of the child himself, is more and more pronounced the more necessary it becomes:

"In proportion as the children advance in their lessons, teaching becomes more subdivided and order more necessary. For this reason and owing to the normal and unrestricted development of the school, the more the pupils instruct themselves, the more amenable to order do they become. The more they themselves feel the need of order, the greater becomes the master's influence over them in this respect."

Here too, then, we must respect life . . . . . life which organizes itself.

Anything that proceeds from a spirit of

[1] *L'école d'Iasnaya-Poliana.*

external order, order superadded on to life, should be eliminated. Thus Tolstoi is led to give up the system of separate interrogations, at fixed dates and hours, when the child is called upon to answer instantaneously. The urge to recite and rehearse, to give vocal utterance to impressions received, is organic in the child. This function, however, like any other function, cannot be called into play to order. After relating to them some historical narrative, Tolstoi prefers to let the children repeat it all together, if they feel the need of this—which they generally do—rather than question them separately, one after another. This separate interrogation is not even a means of checking the knowledge the child has acquired, for it places him in abnormal conditions, when he is generally unable to do himself justice, either from timidity or fear, from revolt against compulsion, or finally from the troublesomeness of a question asked just at a time when his attention was drawn elsewhere and when it would have been more profitable to satisfy it than to drag it forcibly back to something that had for the moment lost its interest.

"I have convinced myself by experience

that there is nothing more harmful to the development of children than the system of questioning each child separately, unless it be the principal-and-subordinate attitude that exists between teacher and pupil. Nothing is more revolting to me than such a sight. Without any right whatsoever, an elderly man inflicts suffering on a child. The teacher knows that the pupil is suffering when he blushes and breaks out into perspiration before him. The teacher himself is worried and troubled, for the thing is painful to him as well, but he has set up a certain rule with which the pupil has to be made accustomed: that of answering all alone."[1]

If the system of interrogation is defective, much more reprehensible, and for the same reasons, is the examination system, which regards interrogation as a supreme end in itself. All the more is this the case, seeing that the very *raison d'être* of the examination is to estimate the extent of a child's knowledge—a result which questioning of this nature is incapable of attaining.

"A pupil in a school learns history and mathematics, and mainly *the art of answering examination questions*. This art I do

[1] *L'école d'Iasnaya-Poliana.*

not look upon as a useful object of instruction. As a teacher, I estimate the extent of of my pupils' knowledge as exactly as I do my own, although neither they nor I rehearse lessons. And if a stranger would estimate the extent of this knowledge, let him live among us and study the practical results and applications of what we know. There is no other way; all examinations are nothing but deceit and lies, an obstacle to real instruction.[1]

In the present system, depending on compulsion and externally enforced order, interest in the subject matter and the thirst of knowledge for its own sake—the only fruitful motives of instruction—are stifled:

"As a rule, the children regard classes in the same light as soldiers regard their drill; they look upon examinations as reviews, as a sad necessity."[2]

For this disciplinary régime there must be substituted the régime of entire freedom, which, far from being a negation of discipline, bears within itself the germs of the only true and living discipline there is.

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[1] *L'école d'Iasnaya-Poliana.*
[2] *L'éducation et la culture.*

To these general principles, which may be summed up in three words, osmosis, non-immixture and freedom, Tolstoi, in the articles of his review, adds detailed advice and experiments on some special subject of instruction: reading, writing, history, composition, the fine arts.

In modern teaching he frequently finds the error for which he blamed Froebel: the analytical method carried to extremes, a method which does not conduce to the development of the human being and is unsuited to the child. An apprenticeship to language and grammar should first come about spontaneously, without any artificial decomposition into simple elements and general rules.

"To my mind, it is as useless and as impossible consciously to give the pupil new conceptions and forms of words as to teach the child to walk by telling him of the laws of equilibrium."

The same thing happens in subjects for composition: instead of proceeding from the simple to the complex, as Froebel requires and as is done too frequently, we must proceed from the concrete to the abstract, which generally means proceeding from the

complex to the simple. The same mistake is continually being made:

"In the art of narration the same mistake occurred as in all the other subjects of instruction. The simplest and most general subjects are regarded as easy by the master; on the other hand, complicated and personal subjects are easy for the pupil. All the natural science text-books begin with general laws, those of language begin with definitions, those of history with division into periods, even geometry begins with the definition and conception of the point and of space."[1]

Tolstoi teaches composition in very original fashion, by engaging in a competition with his pupils. After he has written a few lines, the children want to see; they are displeased with certain details and correct him aloud, suggesting fresh metaphors and situations. And so composition, like questions and answers, becomes a collective affair. The children dictate, Tolstoi discusses and writes. He is struck by the artistic sense of the children, whose freshness and spontaneity of sensation is greater than our own. Hence the title of his

[1] *L'école d'Iasnaya-Poliana.*

essay: *Who should teach the literary art, and to whom?* Tolstoi is tempted to answer this question by the words: "The child to the adult."

An exercise in composition to which he is particuarly addicted consists in propounding a well-known proverb, which, instead of being explained, has to be illustrated by a concrete example, some short story that is realistic and living.

The artistic sense, which such exercises reveal as extremely vivid in the child, seems to him the very foundation of the teaching of history and geography. Here, the subject matter interests the child only in so far as it is artistic and picturesque. In the wide range of human history, it is not so much the importance of the events as the relief and colour they exhibit, that should determine our choice of what we are to teach.

"I have come to this conclusion: that not only is it unnecessary to become acquainted with the tiresome history of Russia, but also that the lives of Cyrus, Alexander of Macedonia, Julius Cæsar and Luther are useless in the development of any child. All characters and events are interesting to the pupil, not by reason of their historical importance,

but owing to the art that enfolds their activities, the artistic legends created by the historian, and, for the most part, because of popular tradition . . . . . History pleases children only when a character is artistic. Historical interest neither does nor can exist for them: therefore it is out of the question to teach history to children." [1]

As regards narration or reading aloud, the child listens most willingly to that which strikes his imagination. Legends please him better than history. He is attracted by anything marvellous.

"I have tried the New Testament, I have tried geography and the history of Russia, I have tried *explanations of the phenomena of nature*, so much in request in these days, but all this was quickly forgotten and listened to without much pleasure, whereas the Old Testament remains graven in their memory."

Tolstoi goes so far as to assert that history, in the strict sense of the word, cannot be really taught until a youth enters the university. All that can be attempted at school is to begin to arouse the historical interest—which must not be confused with the artistic interest—of the child. The

[1] *L'école d'Iasnaya-Poliana.*

artistic interest is excited by any kind of recital, whether picturesque, legendary or marvellous. The most remote periods of history offer him the most intellectual pabulum. But when we begin with these periods of time we are not teaching him history. A real historical interest, interest in the events themselves, when their importance is quite understood, can only be aroused with reference to the most recent and concrete events.

"My own experience and observation have proved to me that the first germ of historical interest appears with a knowledge of contemporary history, occasionally owing to the consciousness that one is sharing in it, as well as because of political interests, discussions, the perusal of newspapers. It is for this reason that the idea of beginning history by way of contemporary events should at once suggest itself to every thoughtful teacher."

Let history then be carried on in both ways, all the time remembering that, when we proceed from the recent to the remote period as did Pestalozzi, we are really teaching history, and when we go from the remote to the recent, we are teaching art.

Indeed, the artistic sense, so remarkable

in the child and so useful as a stay and background for instruction, merits cultivation on its own account. In this connection, Tolstoi devotes a special article to the teaching of the *Fine Arts*, in which he gives detailed advice on instruction in music and drawing. For instance, he recommends the use of figured music:

"I speedily discovered that staff-notation was not very clear, and so decided to replace it by figures—an idea suggested by Jean-Jacques Rousseau himself in his *Dictionnaire de Musique*. Whatever may be said against this method of writing music, any singing master who makes the experiment will always be convinced of the striking superiority of figures over signs, both in reading and in writing. For ten lessons I used signs, then, after a single demonstration with figures in which I explained that it came to the same thing, the children always preferred them; now they always write music with figures."

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So much for the various branches of instruction. Tolstoi also takes up the question of the general organization of teaching. As we have already seen in the Introduction, he

was subsequently to draw up and elaborate a complete project, in answer to the plan set forth by the government. All the same he at once introduces certain fragmentary ideas, interesting in themselves.

In the first place, he condemns, as might have been expected, the examination system :

"To call forth, by means of examinations, a spirit of jealousy in children of eight years, is harmful. To decide, after a two-hours' examination, on the attainments of a pupil of eight, and to form a correct opinion as to the merit of his teachers, is impossible."[1]

Then, we have an interesting conception of the higher education. The present-day university, where there is always a respectful distance between professor and student, is abhorrent to Tolstoi the humanist, who would like to see more warmth of feeling, more intimacy. The professor speaks like a book, and so a book would be just as good; the superiority of oral transmission of knowledge is a superstition; on the other hand, there are many people, with Tolstoi at their head, who assert that they prefer books to oral teaching, and that they understand well only when reading quietly at home. The

[1]*Projet d'un plan général.*

university should be looked upon, not as teaching *ex cathedra*, but as continual co-operation between professor and students:

"In the universities themselves, in the clubs of the students, many of them meet and read and converse, finally deciding as to the manner in which they must come together and talk to one another. Such is the true university.

Let us not trouble ourselves about following the example of the German universities: we can adopt nothing from the Germans. To them, every custom and law is sacred; to us, fortunately or unfortunately, the exact opposite is the case."[1]

In short, it is the humanity and freedom of mutual relations that should direct the higher—and indeed all—education.

"I assert that the universities, not only in Russia, but throughout Europe, *so long as they are not absolutely free, have none other than an arbitrary basis*, and are as bad as the monastic schools. I beseech my future critics not to attenuate my conclusions: either I state a falsehood, or the entire system of school instruction is a mistaken one: there is no middle course."

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[1] *L'éducation et la culture.*

As we see, the reforms which Tolstoi recommends have their origin in a few simple principles. They bear upon the very spirit of the whole teaching. As regards the *methods*, however, that aim at ease or rapidity in some particular subject, Tolstoi is somewhat indifferent and sceptical. Any method is a tool; there may be some tools better than others, but assuredly there are a great number of good ones. The thing that matters is not so much the tool as the hand; not so much the method as the spirit and personality of the master.

Tolstoi inspects a class in which his own method was practised, in the letter but not in the spirit:

"I asked questions in Holy Scripture: no one knew anything, because the master, according to *the new method*, did not make learning by heart compulsory, but related events according to the abridged Scriptures. I questioned them in arithmetic, with the same result, although the master, still following out the new method for two hours each day, went through their numbers up to millions on the blackboard, but without compelling them to learn by heart . . . . . And

the worst of it all was that this happened in accordance with my own method." [1]

This means that there must be no superstitious faith in methods: all the more so because different methods may be desirable for children of varying degrees of intelligence .

"In a word, there is no such thing as the best method. The best method, for any particular master, is the one he knows best. All the other methods a master knows or invents should help forward studies that have been begun under any method whatsoever . . . . . .

The best master is he who always has ready an explanation of anything that proves a stumbling-block to the pupil. With this in view, he should know the greatest possible number of methods, be capable of inventing fresh ones, and especially refrain from a slavish adherence to any particular one, but rather feel convinced that each has advantages of its own, and that the best would be the one which successfully met all the difficulties the pupil might encounter. All this is equivalent to saying that it is not method that is wanted, but art and talent."

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[1] *Sur les méthodes d'enseignement de la lecture et de l'écriture.*

It is the spirit—not the letter—that is of importance. And if it is to be life-giving, this spirit should be a spirit of *love.* Love ought to be the inspiration of all principle, rule and method.

First of all, the master's love of his work:

"If you would raise the pupil to greater heights by your science, you must both love it and know it well, and your pupils will love both the science and yourself, and you will benefit them. But if you yourself do not love it, then, whatever the means by which you force them to learn, science will have no educative influence at all." [1]

Again, and even more important, the master's love of the child, not in the abstract, but the living child of flesh and blood who is there before him.

"School is arranged not in such fashion that it may be easy for the children to learn, but that it may be convenient for the master to teach . . . . . .

There is always a tendency for the master to choose the system of instruction most convenient to himself. The more convenient the method is for the master, the less convenient it is for the pupil. That mode of teaching

[1] *L'Education et la culture.*

which satisfies the pupils is alone right."[1]

It is because he does not attract the child's interest and himself take an interest in the child, because he does not love him and inspire in him a feeling of intelligent sympathy, that the master unwittingly acts like a brute, offends the delicate susceptibilities of his pupil, and does him irreparable wrong.

"They compel him to answer, and so he relates and recites, but he neither dare nor can put any originality into what he says. Whether this was through fear instilled by his former master (he had previously been taught by a priest), or mistrust of his own abilities, or pride, or awkwardness at finding himself facing other children who, he asserted, were beneath him; whether he had at any time appeared before his master in a false light, or been offended by some word his master had uttered, Heaven alone knows; though this awkwardness, even if there is nothing sympathetic about it, was assuredly linked with the noblest elements of his child soul. To expel all this by using a physical or moral scourge is possible, though at the risk of also expelling precious qualities without

[1] *L'école d'Iasnaya-Poliana.*

which the master will have difficulty in inducing the child to make further progress."

And so this precept of love indirectly brings us back to that of freedom, to which we must ever return. This is expressed by Tolstoi when criticizing the conceptions of Markov, who also insists on love, though he upholds the usual system of compulsion. To Tolstoi this is a contradiction in terms.

"The author says that the success of the school depends on love. But love is not a matter of chance; there is no love at all without freedom. In all schools based on the lines of the Yasnaia Poliana School, the same thing occurs again and again. The master should be fond of his school, and I know well that a master, admitting the utmost possible idealistic tendencies, cannot be fond of a school where children are seated on forms, where they move about in obedience to the tinkling of a bell and where punishments are adminstered every Saturday."[1]

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The foregoing remarks fail to give a complete idea of Tolstoi's activity at this period. There is still considerable groping and

[1] *Le progès et la définition de l'instruction.*

analysis, and this is not life. To complete the picture, we must see Tolstoi at work.

We ought to read, either in the articles on the science of teaching or in Biroukof's book, a description of the children in class or at exercise, if we would form a mental picture of Tolstoi, during the winter evenings, in the little school at Yasnaia Poliana, when the fading light makes it impossible to see any longer and he is telling the children some Biblical narrative or historical tale: the little moujiks arrange themselves as they please on forms, tables or window corners, the girls all together in a corner of the room, while one queer little fellow crouches under the chair of the master they love so well. They have been playing and chattering, but order has been restored spontaneously and without compulsion, and now they are eagerly drinking in every word of the story-teller. He himself is moved at the sight of all these eyes shining through the fast approaching shades of night. And when the tale is finished, they want to tell it over again in their turn; they have remembered every word.

Or else, in the course of this same winter, when evening is coming on and the ground

is hard and the leaves all white with hoar-frost, we ought to hear him reassure the children as regards the wolves, tell them how they are caught, draw vivid pictures of primitive and savage life—and finally answer with sympathetic kindness the boy who asks him why people learn to sing.

CHAPTER V

THE SECOND PERIOD

The régime of freedom and innovation in the school at Yasnaia Poliana finally roused the suspicions of the public authorities, and the police began to visit the place. In Tolstoi's absence, they took delight in turning everything topsy-turvy, they rummaged the drawers and pulled up the very flags. Tolstoi was called upon to produce everything he had written since the days of his youth. The government began to interfere. And though nothing of a subversive character was ever discovered, in spite of official hostility and ill-will, the attack proved disastrous. Public opinion took alarm; Tolstoi's energy was shaken. His doubts and moral difficulties were beginning

to exhaust his strength; he felt unequal to the task of struggling, in addition, against men, on behalf of an idea which was not inspired by an ardent faith. In his *Confessions* he says:

"The perpetual struggle necessitated by my efforts at conciliation became so painful to me, my activity in the schools appeared so vague and uncertain, the desire to teach along with that of concealing from myself my own inability, became so hateful that I fell ill, though to an even greater extent morally than physically. I gave up everything and went off into the steppes to breathe the air of the Bashkirs, drink koumiss and live like an animal."

When he was cured, he married. New interests took possession of him—interests that no longer permitted him to devote much time or strength to the schools. His own personal interest being absent, all that he had built up crumbled to pieces. Family life and literary work now absorb his attention and he writes his great work: *War and Peace.*

The second period dates mainly from 1872 to 1875. It is chiefly characterized by the expounding and the working out of the

results gained during the preceding years.[1]

Family life now became for Tolstoi an opportunity of returning to his work as a teacher. In his recollections, Elie Tolstoi tells us how his father undertook the family education.

Such education was perceptibly different from that given to the peasant children. At that time, Tolstoi had not yet begun to practise evangelical equality. Being a great lord, he insisted that social distinctions should be respected:

"We grew up as real 'lords,' proud of the fact, and strangers to the outside world.

Everything that was not ourselves was inferior to us, and therefore unworthy of attention.

From the height of our grandeur we looked down upon the village children. I began to take an interest in them only when they taught me things I did not know—things I was forbidden to know. At the time, I was about ten years of age. We would go into the village to slide, and began to pick up an acquaintance with the little peasants. When papa noticed this he speedily put things right.

[1]Most of the documents referring to this period appear in volume XIV. of the *Oeuvres complètes*.

And so we grew up, surrounded, as by a wall, with English governesses, with tutors and professors."

In spite of this wall, Tolstoi personally sets about the education of his children; in these direct and human relationships we find that he is more like himself. It is he who teaches them, now arithmetic, now Greek. The latter he teaches in his own fashion, which represents the direct method carried to its highest point; here, as elsewhere, he will have nothing to do with analysis and the slow laborious study of the forms of words and of grammatical rules.

"We began our lessons with Xenophon.

He explained the alphabet and then immediately set me to read the *Anabasis*.

At first it was very difficult. I sat there with haggard eyes; sometimes they filled with tears. All the same, I came to understand, after a time, what it was all about.

I learnt Latin in the same way.

In 1871, when entering for my entrance examination at Polivânov's 'classical school' in Moscow, I amazed the professors by translating the classics better than was required for the purpose; even though I was ignorant of the grammar.

I came to the conclusion that my father's quaint and original system was the right one. It was after the same fashion that, later on, he taught me Hebrew."

Tolstoi gave his children a good all-round education. He was interested in gymnastics and himself accompanied them when skating or hunting. Like Locke and Rousseau, he insisted on everything that hardens, that increases physical or moral strength, that encourages boldness and independence.

"Such an adjective as soft or effeminate was one to be ridiculed. There could be no greater insult than for papa to use such a word, when referring to anyone."

Nor was he tender or gentle:

"When out for a walk or a ride, papa never waited for those who, for some reason or other, lagged in the rear. If I happened to be behind the rest, or in tears, he would mimic me with the words: 'They won't wait for me.' Then I would weep louder than ever in my indignation; all the same, I caught up with the rest."

He does not punish, but he takes care that the due penalty shall be the natural and necessary consequence of wrong-doing. He does not scold a child for being untidy; but

it is understood that no one goes out without a hat on his head, and if, when recreation time comes round a child cannot find his hat, then he does not go with the rest. It is purely a matter of course.

At the conclusion of his book, Elie Tolstoi admires the way in which his father succeeded in controlling children without appearing to do so:

"Papa never compelled us to do anything; all the same, of our own initiative, it came about that we did whatever he wished. Mamma would often scold and punish us; but he had only to look straight into our eyes. We understood his glance, and that was more effective than a command . . . . . .

My father's great power as a teacher lay in the fact that it was no more possible to conceal oneself from him than from one's own conscience. He knew everything; to deceive him was to deceive oneself—a thing as painful as it was ineffectual."

* * * * *

About this time, Tolstoi began to receive peasant children for instruction at his own home. Gradually he became passionately interested in the science of instruction.

The first edition of the *Syllabary* appears in 1872; the second, with considerable alterations, in 1880. This *Syllabary* is a veritable mass of practical elementary instruction. It contains everything the child has to learn: reading, writing, arithmetic; the rudiments of natural and of human history.

It consists of four books, graduated to apply to four years of instruction. The first book consists of four parts: the first is the syllabary, strictly so called, the second contains narrations for progressive reading, the third, exercises in the reading of old Slavonic (compulsory for pupils in Russian schools as being the language of religion), and the fourth, arithmetic. The advanced books are divided in the same way, except that they do not contain the first part, the syllabary.

The narrations, instead of being simple reading exercises, are interesting on their own account, forming as they do, an initiation into natural or human history.

This is a work of considerable scope and import; it is rationally graduated far more than any particular method extolled by Tolstoi. But then he always manifests the same indifference as regards methods:

"The aim of this *Syllabary* is to give the pupils, at the smallest cost, the greatest number of comprehensible and gradually arranged things, from the simplest and easiest to the most complex, so that this slow graduation may serve as the chief means of learning to read and write by any method whatsoever."[1]

"By any method whatsoever" is perhaps rather too much to say. Even without desiring it, Tolstoi has paths of his own, which he regards as short cuts. The *Syllabary* is full of original views and opinions, dealing with some particular subject of instruction.

For instance, in dealing with the alphabet, Tolstoi gives a simplified sketch of the characters, without thick down or thin up strokes, so that the complexity of the drawing may not hold the attention of the child and cause him to neglect the principal form.

It is chiefly in arithmetic that Tolstoi manifests ideas of an unforeseen nature. He is not content with teaching that the numbers should be written in the decimal system, he wants all the systems, for instance, that with six as its base, where the number seven, consisting of a six and a one, is written as II,

[1] Preface of the second edition.

etc. . . . . . Here again we recognize the realist, who is strongly opposed to any one becoming the victim of conventions and taking them for realities. Now the decimal system, like every system, is a convention, and endless other conventions are possible.

This process, which seems as though it would complicate matters, subsequently presents another advantage: when dealing with fractions. Decimal fractions will be taught first. Then vulgar fractions will be explained as depending, in the other systems, on decimal fractions in the decimal system. This instruction in fractions is quite original and remarkable.

"Whole numbers are always ciphered in the decimal system and very seldom in other systems, whereas fractions are seldom ciphered in the decimal system and almost always in different systems. Fractions, in the decimal system, are always written as follows: 0.35: thirty-five hundredths; 1.017: one and seventeen thousandths. And fractions, in other systems, are written thus: the number, and, below it, the base on which the calculation is made; this base is called the *denominator* and the number itself the *numerator*.[1]

[1] *Syllabaire*, Book IV.

Another idea is for beginners to substitute Roman for Arabic figures. In Roman figures, the composition of the numbers approximates nearer to reality; the adding of a unit is represented by the adding of a stick; this is more visual and more tangible, more easy for the child to understand.[1] And when, at a later period, the child learns Arabic figures, it will be an additional opportunity of enabling him to understand that any system of signs is itself a convention, that the sign is not the thing. This fundamental realism is always implicitly contained in Tolstoi's ideas.

In *Indications for masters*, we find another fundamental principle familiar to Tolstoi the teacher: he again protests against analytical instruction, which at one time solemnly informs the child about things that are self-evident (the ceiling is above) and at another time imposes on him, under the plea of simplicity, abstractions of which he is unable to form any idea whatsoever:

[1] I have experimented with this method. It enables one to explain operations to the child rationally, whereas with Arabic figures one must confine oneself to teaching him a routine the rationale of which he is unable to understand. Besides, it automatically develops mental calculation, because the child sees the numbers split up into their constituent parts. Its advantages are altogether surprising.

"Lay aside grammatical and syntactical definitions, sub-divisions of the parts and forms of speech, and general rules, but compel the pupil to use forms of speech without naming them, more particularly to read as much as possible and understand what he reads, as well as to write down something of his own invention. Correct him not because he has broken the rule, definition, and subdivision, but because he has failed in comprehension, in construction and in clarity.

In the natural sciences avoid classifications, hypotheses regarding the development of organisms, and explanations as to their construction; rather give the pupil as many details as possible on the life of various animals and plants."

The narrations contained in the *Syllabary*—which are both reading exercises and exercises in familiar and practical instruction—conform to this advice. There are narrations dealing with natural history and with physics: silkworms, the magnet—there are true stories—there are accounts of happenings in daily life—and finally there are legends and fables adapted from Æsop, as well as from Hindu and other sources. Tolstoi accordingly does not proscribe fiction,

though here also he has a predilection for the realistic. In the *Fables* themselves, he prefers those that show least convention and most verisimilitude : the Liar, the Woman and the Hen, the Gardener and his Children, the Father and his Children, Two Friends, etc. . . . . . Out of eighty-six fables, there are eighteen which presuppose no unlikelihood of any kind : a large proportion for fables. In the narrations, the tendency is even more pronounced; out of seventy narrations I count ten that are scientific and thirty-one realistic, twenty-one that are true to history and only eight legends. This does not appear to have been intentional. It is a matter of temperament, one more sign of that fundamental realism which we remarked at the outset.

This *Syllabary* met with extraordinary success. Although it was not approved by the government, and only approved text-books are to be used in schools, from the first day it appeared it has been the basis of elementary education in Russia. Government malevolence, prohibition—nothing has been of any avail. Biroukov asserts that there have been a million and a half copies printed in Russia, and as each copy can be

read by several children, it follows that there are several million children who make use of the *Syllabary*.

The narrations more especially have been favourably received. Some of these, in an edition illustrated by the artist Goslavski[1] are given to children as picture books.

* * * * *

In a long and important article—*On the Instruction of the People*—which appeared in 1875, Tolstoi sets forth the main points of his conclusions as regards education. The ideas we have seen elaborated day by day are here compiled and organized, arranged more and more completely in accordance with a few simple leading principles. Here too, he has advanced from the complex to the simple. Tolstoi starts with varied every-day experience and arrives at general principles.

Tolstoi is now aware how radical and revolutionary are his ideas. His mind, which cannot become reconciled to approximations, to hypocrisy and convention, shows a tendency to make a clean sweep of things.

[1]Rainbow Publications, Moscow.

Casting a backward glance over his articles of the first period, he judges them in these terms:

"I did not understand, when I asked the question: 'What and how must we teach?' that I was like a man who, for instance, at a meeting of Turkish pachas discussing about the means of imposing the greatest number of taxes on the people, were to propound the following question: 'Gentlemen, before we can know who are to be taxed and to what extent, we must first settle the question: 'On what is our right to collect taxes based?' Manifestly all the pachas would continue their discussion as to the means of deducting the taxes, and would answer so unseasonable a question with nothing but silence."

Thus boldly, as his nature and experience alike demand, he again calls everything into question, as he does somewhat later on a larger scale, with reference to the whole of human and social life. The science of instruction is not something completed, it is in process of evolution, and in our ignorance there could be nothing more ill-timed than apriorism, which starts with general principles and presupposes as known that which

is not—and perhaps never will be—known:

"All the pedagogues of this school, especially the Germans, rely on the false conception that those philosophical questions, which have remained unsolved from the time of Plato to the time of Kant, are settled once for all by themselves, and so decisively that the methods of acquiring impressions and sensations, ideas and concepts, are worked out in the slightest details, that the parts of what we call the soul—or essence—of man are analysed and divided by them, and all this in so solid a fashion that it is possible, without a mistake, to build up the science of school instruction upon this knowledge."

All dogmatism is deserving of condemnation, whether the dogmatism of modern—would-be scientific—pedagogues, or that of the ecclesiastical pedagogues of long ago. And Tolstoi takes a delight in drawing this parallel—which he is to extend later on—between the dogmatism of the Church and that of science: the latter being no less rash in its affirmations, no less superstitious than the former. Science, like the Church, regards itself as omniscient, and puts forth its decrees accordingly.

"The pedagogue of the old school, which

I will call *ecclesiastical* for short, is absolutely certain that teaching must be carried on by making the pupil learn the psalter and the prayer-book by heart; he will not allow the slightest modification to be made. Likewise, the master of the new German school knows without the shadow of a doubt that one should teach along the lines of Bounakov and Evtouchevsky, ask what 'up' and 'down' mean, invent a story about one's favourite animal, and tolerate no change of any kind in one's methods."

This dogmatism in theory results, in practice, in teaching that is absolute and unanswerable, with compulsion as its foundation. The master knows what the child needs; he has only to impose it upon him.

"In the one school as in the other, the mechanical side of instruction gets the better of the intellectual; in both alike the pupils are distinguished by good hand-writing and correct pronunciation, by reading which follows the writing rather than the pronunciation. In both schools there is always external order; the children, kept in a continual state of dread, can be controlled only by adopting the utmost strictness. In passing, Korolev mentions that blows are quite a

frequent accompaniment of the phonetic method."

On the other hand, if we confess our philosophical ignorance of human—and child—nature, then experience alone, the attention paid to life itself, can teach and guide us. *Discat a puero magister.*[1] The child will teach the master his own needs; the school will be a laboratory, an observation ground, in which a few certainties will gradually work themselves into manifestation.

From this time onward, Tolstoi becomes aware of the true import of that principle of freedom to which he ever felt himself invincibly brought back. Freedom is a method, the one supreme method and the criterion of methods. The free child manifests his biological needs, refuses such intellectual food as does not agree with him, and demands that which his development requires.

"In my opinion, no one will deny that the most satisfactory relation between master and pupil is the natural one, that relations contrary to nature are founded on compulsion. Such being the case, the measure of any method varies according as the mutual

[1] As the Institut J. J. Rousseau says at a later date.

relations are more or less natural, and therefore in proportion as there is greater or less compulsion to study. The less the children learn by compulsion, the better the method; the more they are compelled, the worse the method."

This quality of freedom as a method and a touchstone is not a new theory, a new dogmatism. It has been tested, and that successfully, at Yasnaia Poliana:

"In my articles on the science of instruction I have set forth the theoretical causes which compel me to consider the free choice of the pupils themselves regarding what they must learn and the way to learn it, as being the sole basis of all teaching. But in practice, first on a large scale and then on a smaller, I have always applied these rules to the schools I controlled, and the results were invariably good, both for masters and for pupils, as well as for the elaboration of new methods. This I boldly assert, as witness hundreds of visitors to the school of Yasnaia Poliana."

This freedom, which affords us a sure indication as to the needs of the child, also leads us to new and surprising discoveries. It shows us to what extent ordinary educa-

tion disregards these needs and how far we are from the reality of things:

"As I detest compulsion in teaching, both from conviction and because it is in my nature to do so, I never practised it in the slightest degree; whenever I noticed that the children did not willingly accept certain things, I never insisted, but tried to find a more expedient way of attaining my object.

The result of these experiments both in my own case, and in that of the masters who worked with me at Yasnaia Poliana and in other schools, regarding freedom as the basis of all instruction, was the conviction that almost everything written for schools in educational circles has nothing whatever to do with the reality of the situation, and that several of the methods taught, such as visual instruction, natural science, [1] phonetics, etc., rouse disgust and ridicule, and are not acceptable to the pupils."

Thus does the freedom of the child—a freedom the nature and extent of which are determined by experience itself—become the basis of all instruction. We must come to know the child; with which end in

[1]These expressions describe the pedantic methods of the German followers of Pestalozzi.

view, it is necessary that he manifest, in our presence, both his personality and his life with the utmost possible freedom.

CHAPTER VI

THE THIRD PERIOD

A third period is the one that follows the religious crisis. It is at its highest during the last few years of his life (1900-1910). In his new conception of life it manifests the integration of Tolstoi's ideas on the science of instruction.

Such a revolution as this crisis proved to be could not help having a repercussion on all his ideas. In *What are we to do?* he is already aware that the new demands of his moral life do not harmonize with instruction of the cultured classes, that very instruction he had been in the habit of giving to his own children.

"What the people mean by 'instruction' is fashionable clothing, polite conversation, well-kept hands, a certain cleanliness. To distinguish him from the rest, such a man is said to be 'instructed.' In somewhat superior circles, instruction implies all these

things, though there is added a slight acquaintance with the piano, French and orthography, along with a still greater degree of external cleanliness. In even higher circles, we have the study of English, the higher education diploma, and a very refinement of cleanliness. But whatever be the environment it is always the same thing at bottom.

Instruction comprises such formality and knowledge as should distinguish one man from the rest. Its object is the same as that of cleanliness: to set ourselves apart from the masses of the poor so that the cold and the famished may not see how we enjoy ourselves. But we cannot hide ourselves; and they *do* see."

In a word, instruction as understood in present-day society aims rather at setting up differences between men than at uniting them. This is not simply opposed to Tolstoi's new point of view, it is contrary to his most profound tendencies—tendencies which finally compel him to make it a matter of conscience. He cannot help being aware of the contradiction within himself. And it is contrary to his humanism, to the need he feels of a wide human sympathy. We have seen in the last

chapter but one that this craving after sympathy and fellowship was to him the sole basis of instruction, which he thus regarded as a kind of wholly spontaneous osmosis. Nothing could be more antagonistic to the *instruction-luxe* as understood by present-day society.

This point of view, held by society, not only corrupts the instruction given to the leisured classes, it also makes impossible any useful influence these classes might have upon the people and their children. The relations thus created are embarrassed, artificial and corrupt from the very outset. When Tolstoi, wishing to gauge the poverty and wretchedness of the inhabitants of Moscow, helps in the census-taking and visits the families of the poor, he is painfully enlightened on the matter:

"I was particularly struck by one of the children, named Sergius, a boy of twelve. He was a bold-spirited intelligent child, staying with a shoemaker, though at the time he had nowhere to go, his master having been sent to prison. I pitied him with all my heart and determined to help him. . . . . .

I took the child home and left him in the kitchen. I could not let the vermin-

infested boy associate with my own children; indeed, I thought a great deal of myself because he did not trouble me . . . only the cook. . . . . . . The child stayed about a week with us. During this week, I chanced to meet him on two occasions, and said a few words to him. Walking along, I called on a shoemaker whom I knew and suggested that he should take the boy as an apprentice . . . . . . A peasant, who chanced to call upon me, offered to take him into his family and to find him work on the land. The child refused, and a week afterwards disappeared . . . . I went to Rjanov for news of him. He had returned, but was not in the house at the time; two days previously, he had gone to the Presnia Ponds where he had joined a cavalcade of men dressed as savages and accompanied by an elephant, and was receiving thirty copecks a day. It was a sort of public show. I went a second time, but he was so ungrateful that he tried to keep out of my way. Had I then reflected on the life of this boy and compared it with my own, I should have understood that he had been spoiled through having learnt the possibility of a gay life without working, because he was not accustomed to work."

The first result, then, of the crisis, in education as in other things, is to incite Tolstoi to come into closer contact with the people, to demolish, after so many other barriers, that of luxury and the inequality of comfort. Then his new ideas assume form, a positive faith succeeds the torments of doubt, the discontent he feels with himself and the whole world. And this faith can but strengthen his habitual confidence in human nature, in the original moral health of the child. More than ever does the would-be civilized adult appear to him as a distorted image of what was natural and healthy in the normal child. We must become like the latter, if we are to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. More than ever does the child seem to him deserving of respect; more than ever should we do our best not to deform or harm him in any way.

In a series of little plays entitled *La Sagesse enfantine*,[1] Tolstoi takes a roguish delight in presenting to us, in a score of forms, the child who shuts his mouth, refusing to reply to grown-up persons who are imprudent enough to discuss with him such subjects as religion, war, the home-land, the

[1] *Le Père Serge et autres contes*, Nelson.

death penalty, prison, art, science or instruction. It is invariably the child who is right; it is he who manifests goodness. This is because fundamental goodness is innate in man; all that is needed to behold it in its purity is to refrain from hiding it behind specious reasonings and prejudices.

Thus is Tolstoi brought into close quarters with the child and with the people, thus does he undermine the last trenches of pride and pedantry behind which the cultured teacher takes up his position. In his place we see appear the kind old man who, in his moujik's blouse, answers simply and unaffectedly the questions of the children, or tells them the tale of the cucumbers—indicating, with his outstretched hands, the length of a cucumber. It is thus we see him depicted on the cover of his story-book, illustrated by Goslavski.—He has become the grandfather.

Not only does he narrate, but he also writes, stories that are masterpieces in their way. Whether addressing himself to the children or to the people, it is always in the same tone of gentle simplicity accessible to all, without ever being commonplace or dull. All his tales, therefore, may be looked upon

as having been written for the child—the child of various ages.

Certain of his popular stories (1881-1886) are famous: *What men live by;* the legend of the shoemaker visited by an angel—*Neglect the fire and you cannot put it out:* a story symbolical of the stirring up of hatred: pictures of primitive mankind, simple without affectation, illustrations, alike realistic and mystical, of the doctrine of love which Tolstoi proclaims aloud. Then too there are the *Popular Legends* (1886): that of the devilkin who invented alcohol, those of the three old men walking on the sea, and the powerfully suggestive one entitled: *How much land does a man require?* in which we find that the man who ran for a whole day, to increase the extent of his possessions, falls dead just as the sun is setting, thus needing no more earth than is sufficient to bury a corpse. And lastly, dedicated principally to children, are such legends as *Ivan the Fool*, in which we are given a forecast of military aviation—and *Children may be wiser than their Elders*, in which certain mothers fall to loggerheads over a children's dispute or quarrel which has long been settled:

It is on account of these children that you

have begun to quarrel, whereas they have long since forgotten all about it and are playing happily together. They have more sense than you have."

We can well imagine that Tolstoi in his latter years adopts the method of story and parable when speaking to children, whom once more, in the early years of a new century, he gathers around him, teaching them the laws of life and of goodness in the spirit of the divine exhortation: "Let the little ones come unto me."

And it is about this time that the main outlines, also simplified and now quite definitive, of his theories regarding instruction, are brought to a head. The principal documents in which he expresses his ideas consist of two long letters:

The letter to Biroukov (1901)—remodelled in the form of an article which was never finished. [1]

And the letter to Boulgakov (1st May, 1909) [2] marking a final stage and constituting the pedagogic testament of Tolstoi.

The first letter is in reply to Tolstoi's friend and biographer, Paul Biroukov, an

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[1] *Lettres*, II., Stock, Paris.
[2] Unpublished.

exile living near Geneva, who had there started a children's home *pension* and had asked for advice and instruction. The letter he received is thus above all else practical. Boulgakov, who was shortly afterwards to become Tolstoi's secretary, had written to him for enlightenment regarding certain contradictions which he imagined he had found in the articles dealing with the science of instruction at different periods. Tolstoi, in his reply, examines the situation mainly from the theoretical point of view, and so the two letters fortunately complement each other.

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In the letter to Biroukov emphasis is laid on an original idea which did not appear in previous articles. Tolstoi now asserts that education can only be defined in terms of something else: suggestion, a word which is not given the elastic meaning it has in ordinary language, but is used in the technical sense of the psychiatrist. To Tolstoi, as to the Nancy School, suggestion, in its clinical signification, is a normal and very general form of human activity.

"The quality of each human activity is

such that—as psychiatrists are well aware—if man finds himself in a state of hypnosis or idiocy, i.e., if he has within himself no interior motive of activity, he obeys the first suggestion that acts upon him; most frequently this takes the form of imitating what he sees or of repeating what he has already done. Tell him to walk, and he walks; in front of a wall he continues to move his legs as though still walking. Bring a spoon gradually nearer to his mouth and he will empty the contents into his mouth unless he is prevented from doing so. Thus do idiots and hypnotic subjects act. But men in their senses are also capable of obedience to suggestion, either another's or their own."

And Tolstoi categorically adds:

"Education is based on this human capacity."

This identification—perhaps theoretically too absolute—of suggestion and education is fruitful in that it invites us to grasp the full meaning and scope of education. Indeed, we know what terrible results may be determined by an evil suggestion; but this danger is not confined to the hypnotism of the clinic; it is to be found in ordinary education:

"This capacity for suggestion possessed by children places them completely in the power of adults; consequently, we see how important it is that children should be subjected, not to evil and deceitful influences, but rather to good and reliable inspirations."

This comparison supplies Tolstoi with the principle of a fresh distinction to be drawn between instruction and education, strictly so called. Suggestion, as a matter of fact, may be determined either consciously or unconsciously:

"All that we intentionally teach to children, whether trade, profession or scientific knowledge, is conscious suggestion; all that children imitate, independently of our wishes—above all in our life and actions—is unconscious suggestion.

Conscious suggestion is what is called instruction; unconscious suggestion is what we call, in the narrow sense, education."

Strictly, education, which had previously been dealt with lightly by Tolstoi, because devoid of moral conviction, a firm criterion of good and evil—now seems to him the one essential thing. Nevertheless, he continues as in the past to assert that education is not an object of instruction; it cannot be

reduced to rules and learnt like a catechism. He denounces as error or hypocrisy the transposition of education from the domain of the unconscious into that of the conscious. Instruction alone can be administered consciously. If we feel that we must dispense education also by means of rules to which it is frequently advisable to add the words: "Do what I say, not what I do," that is because unconscious transmission has failed. And this too, is owing to the depravity of our own lives. Our hypocritical rules and regulations are of no avail, education is always transmitted unconsciously; in spite of our rules, it is our life, our involuntary example, every day and every hour, that will exert an influence upon the child. Education is the spontaneous radiation of our life, our entire moral being, upon the child. Thus, the only way to give a good education is to reform ourselves, to educate ourselves. There is not—cannot be —any other. This is very simple, far simpler than all the pedagogies in the world; it is also more difficult.

We find this idea expressed in various passages from diary and letters:[1]

[1] *Fragments*, from the same volume as the letter to Biroukov.

"Education seems a complicated and difficult task, so long as we are determined to bring up our children or those of others, without bringing up ourselves properly. If we understand that we can bring up others only by our own example, we lay aside the question of education and there is but one question left, concerning life : how are we to live? I am acquainted with no single fact dealing with the education of children which does not form part of the education of oneself."

The contagion of example does not exclude the use of the spoken word. But do not let such speech be intentional, laboured, an elaboration of rules; let it emanate, as does example itself, from the heart of our life and our conviction; let it be the spontaneous, almost unconscious, breath of our moral being:

"The example of one's own life also contains speech in itself. Example teaches one to live and to speak, but speech does not contain example within itself."

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Tolstoi continues to regard instruction as based on freedom, which appears to him more and more clearly as the criterion of the child's

biological needs—needs as real and imperious as those of organic life:

"However strange it may seem to us who have so perverted instruction, entire freedom in teaching, i.e., freedom for the pupil to study when he wishes is the *conditio sine qua non* of all fruitful teaching, just as, in the case of eating, the *conditio sine qua non* is that he who eats should have a desire to eat. The only difference is that, in material things, the injury caused by restriction of freedom immediately manifests itself in vomiting or in stomach disturbance, whereas in spiritual things, the results are more tardy, appearing, it may be, only after a number of years."[1]

This freedom should extend, above all, to religious instruction which is closely akin to moral instruction and education. It ought to share in the spontaneity of this latter:

"Now this is how I look upon the teaching of the catechism:

In spite of my absolute convictions on this subject, even now, if I were a teacher, I should not suggest them to children, out of respect for their freedom and for that of parents who regard this untruth as

[1] *Letter to Biroukof.*

something sacred. As before, however, though I should avoid speaking of these things, whenever the children asked me a question on the subject, I should answer them quite frankly what I think of it."

From the point of view of material for instruction, Tolstoi distinguishes three branches of learning, and sketches out a rapid classification of the sciences. In effect, human thought has developed in three directions:

1. The religious direction (religion and philosophy).

2. The experimental direction (natural science, mechanics, physics, chemistry, physiology).

3. The abstract direction (mathematical sciences).

History—in its present state—appears to him an arbitrary and false science; he refuses to admit it into his classification.

In addition, apart from this material distinction, he sets up a formal distinction, laying down three ways of transmitting thoughts:

1. Language, or rather languages—from which springs another science: linguistics.

2. The plastic art, painting and sculpture.

3. Music and singing, which are particularly suitable for the expression of feelings.

From the various combinations that are practically possible between these two classifications, the many forms of modern teaching may readily be deduced. In the mind of Tolstoi, art is the one pre-eminent means of transmission. By means of artistic narrations, we have seen him initiating the child into history—and into natural history. Nor would he disdain music or painting in order to bring about an understanding of religious feeling. The main thing is to transmit or pass on, and when art—as occasionally happens—reveals itself as the most direct means of attaining this end, it acquires the utmost importance for teaching purposes. It is still necessary, however, that the child should manifest a spontaneous interest in art. For instance, the teaching of the piano to young children is looked upon by Tolstoi as due to an erroneous conception. Begin with singing—which is more natural and less costly—and so find out if the child shows any taste or talent for this art; then it will be time enough to consider the study of a musical instrument.

But however important the art, language and languages still are and will continue to be the usual method of transmitting knowledge, the more so in proportion as this latter becomes more abstract. It is impossible to exaggerate the part they are destined to play:

"Concerning the teaching of languages—the more one knows, the better it will be—I deem it absolutely necessary to learn French and German; English and Esperanto also if possible. Languages must be taught by getting the pupil to read a book with which he is acquainted and trying to induce him to grasp its general meaning; then draw his attention to the words that are essential, to the roots and the grammatical forms."

In spite of the distinction made by Tolstoi at the outset, we see that this programme of instruction, far from excluding all concern for—is imbued with the very spirit of—education. This is proved by the importance he attaches to the arts, for art, in Tolstoi's opinion, is particularly serviceable in transmitting feelings, and this transmission of feeling is a permeation of the moral life; it is no longer instruction, it is education. In the same way, the import-

ance attached to languages, particularly to Esperanto the universal language, testifies to his constant solicitude for understanding, for human fellowship. We may affirm that in the letter to Biroukov, the distinction between education and instruction, though still theoretically asserted and still real from one point of view, tends to disappear when confronted with the details of practical life.

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In the letter to Boulgakov, written eight years afterwards, this distinction has completely vanished. Tolstoi has finally abandoned the uncertain and untenable position he had been led to assume at the outset of his career as a teacher in consequence of his moral doubts.

"Before all else, I will say that the distinction between education and instruction, in my past articles on the science of teaching, is an artificial one. Education and instruction are indivisible. One cannot give an education without transmitting knowledge, and, on the other hand, all knowledge possesses an educative influence."

Again, Tolstoi asserts that he has not varied in his opinion regarding the part

played by freedom. He even insists on freedom more than ever, enlarging his conception of it. Freedom is not only the absence of compulsion, it is also—and the idea is anything but a shallow one—the absence of all extrinsic interest that is alien to the very object of instruction, such as interest in rewards and privileges of whatsoever kind that may be the fruit of instruction. Such interest, indeed, tends to pervert the spontaneous interest in study itself; the attitude of the child, who seems to love instruction for its own sake—not, like a performing dog, to obtain a lump of sugar—is an attitude that deceives us, and once more we find the child's personality and his needs no longer manifesting themselves. The idea had been in the mind of Tolstoi previously, but this time it is subordinated to the idea of freedom, it appears as a consequence of the same principle, and we have once again this progress from the complex to the simple, this increasing unification of ideas under a few guiding principles. The principle of freedom is still one of the strongest.

Freedom, as thus understood, should belong to masters and to pupils alike; the former also should be released from all interests

extrinsic to their work. It is on this condition that they will be free, that they also will act with full spontaneity, and will set up between the children and themselves the most human and natural ties, relations most favourable to osmosis. Thus will they of necessity love both their work and the children they teach. Tolstoi requires of teachers the same sacrifice which he also requires of artists: that they will never agree to regard either education or art as a means of livelihood. Let them have some other work, a trade or profession, agriculture, and let them devote to their spiritual task their hours of undisturbed freedom. In this way, the necessity of the moral element, in instruction and education alike, asserts itself. The free untrammelled devotion of the teacher, like the freedom of the child, becomes a question of method.

Neither the freedom of the child nor that of the master, however, is adequate to determine the subjects of instruction. The spontaneous choice of the child, to which Tolstoi attaches the utmost importance, seems to him always essential, though inadequate. Such a choice may point out general tendencies, but it runs the risk

of becoming subject to caprice or whim. The free choice of the teacher, too, may become arbitrary. And so Tolstoi finds the theoretical criterion, which he had previously rejected, once more asserting itself. Nevertheless, his opinion has changed less than might have been imagined. As a matter of fact, we have seen him, at the very beginning of his career, asserting that a theoretical criterion was possible only in a religious conception. This criterion had always to him seemed desirable. The reason he had denied its possibility is that he lacked the religious conception. But now, he has found it, and his faith is firmly rooted. This faith, i.e., *this conception of the meaning of human life*, supplies him with the criterion.

And this criterion is necessary. Like Pascal, Tolstoi is bewildered and crushed by the infinitude of possible science. The things capable of becoming material for knowledge are innumerable and indefinitely decomposable. In such an infinitude, what shall be our choice? It can be determined only by the degree of urgency and utility which knowledge possesses with reference to life, and this degree in turn can be established

only in accordance with a clear conception of the meaning of life.

In this modern world of ours, this conception, this faith—and consequently the criterion that results therefrom—are lacking:

"And so at the present time we find a complete absence of any religion common to the majority of mankind, the absence of any conception of the meaning and aim of human life, and therefore the absence of anything upon which instruction may be founded, thus making impossible both a definite choice and a right distribution of knowledge."

Hence this science of ours—the very science we claim the right to impose upon children—has developed haphazard, in the most arbitrary fashion. Tolstoi compares possible knowledge to an infinity of lines and rays, emanating from one and the same centre and speeding into endless space. In a rational and harmonious development of knowledge, there would have been chosen certain rays—the most useful according to our conception of life—and we should have advanced along each of them at an almost equal pace, according to the use we could have made of them, so as to obtain a sphere

of acquired knowledge amid the inaccessible infinitude of possible attainments.[1]

Tolstoi, however, regards this ideal sphere as far from being realized. Our science, arbitrarily developed, offers us certain rays along which we have made considerable progress, whereas along certain others we have advanced no more than a few steps. Instead of being harmonious like a sphere, our science is strange and outlandish, irregular and monstrous, like some unmeaning scrawl. At one time suffering from atrophy, at another from hypertrophy, it is a product of chance, not a product of reason. And instruction has to share this monstrous state of things.

Undoubtedly, no acquisition of knowledge, *per se*, can be bad, though relatively it may become so. When we have exact and developed knowledge in some domain of doubtful utility and yet neglect to acquire knowledge that is morally urgent, then the

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[1]It may be that this figure or image is taken from Spencer who, desirous of expressing the immensity of the unknown and the unknowable, compares knowledge to a sphere continually increasing in size; the more it grows, the greater the expanse of surface there is to contact the surrounding unknown. The more we know, the more we encroach upon the unknown.

former knowledge, in a way, is morally to be condemned.

Brotherhood, love, doing good to one's neighbour: such is the meaning of human life. Therefore, such knowledge as the weight of the sun, the distance of the stars, the evolution of micro-organisms, the victories won by some king or other thousands of years ago—all of which knowledge we regard very highly—is monstrous and parasitical, not in itself, but with reference to our almost complete ignorance of the real life of every-day humanity, that life with which we ought to be acquainted, seeing that it is our duty to improve it.

"At school we learn all sorts of things about Alexander the Great, about Louis the Fourteenth and his mistresses, but we know nothing of the life, the toil and the sufferings of our brothers and sisters labouring by our side in village and town."

Consequently, rational instruction will have as its foundation that which supplies us with the criterion, the motive of our choice, to wit, religious and moral knowledge. No longer is there any doubt in Tolstoi's mind as regards the object of this knowledge. The sages of all lands and times

have learnt certain great and simple truths which ought to control and guide the life of man. Such intimate knowledge is the only revelation there is, but this revelation, ever renewable, is sufficient for us. It is the expression of man's relations with the infinite universe; these relations are the very essence of religion, a term signifying a link or bond; they determine imprescriptible laws, as clear and evident as the existence of the infinite universe itself:[1]

"In my opinion, then, the first and principal knowledge to be transmitted both to children and to adults should be reserved for those eternal and inevitable questions that spring from the depths of the soul of every fully conscious human being. The first question: What am I, and what are my relations with the infinite universe? The second question, following on the first: How should I live, what should I regard as good and what evil, and this at all times and in every circumstance?"

This basis once established, we are enabled to determine the other objects of knowledge, according to their degree of moral urgency

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[1]Compare: *What is Religion?*

and usefulness. The most urgent are those that help us to carry out our task of loving.

"Had we regarded instruction as based on religion and morality, we should first have studied the life of our fellow-beings, the life of mankind, i.e., ethnography; then, according to the degree of importance for a rational life, we should have studied zoology, mathematics, physics, chemistry and other sciences."

Thus, right on to the end, we find in Tolstoi both the humanist and the practical man. Science, and consequently instruction, are of no value in themselves alone; they should be devoted to the service of life, a life itself dedicated to the moral ideal.

PART III

LEADING IDEAS

CHAPTER VII

FREEDOM AND SUGGESTION

We have followed the entire evolution of Tolstoi the teacher, watching his ideas work themselves out and become modified and corrected day by day. In spite, however, of the changes introduced into them by time, experience and reflection, we cannot help being struck by their fundamental unity. We have seen that they come under a few increasingly general and simple principles. All the same, Tolstoi never co-ordinated them in one complete work. We will now attempt this co-ordination, though without giving way to the facile temptation of reducing everything to a system. As we unfold and set forth the leading ideas of Tolstoi's pedagogy, we shall inevitably encounter ideas that dominate the whole of his philosophy; through the educator we shall

reach to the thinker, and his entire thought will thereby appear before us, clear and illumined.

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The primordial tendency of this pedagogy is a protest against everything in ordinary education that systematically checks or hinders *the free development of life.*

What are the most apparent reasons for this protest?

In the first place, there is the certainty that the normal child is, if not fundamentally good as Rousseau alleged, at all events *healthy.* And this idea of Rousseau, thus rectified, appears before the mind with new force. Nature cannot be our ideal, since nature—as generally understood and as it shows itself in the child—is that "animal nature" for which Tolstoi's whole doctrine aims at substituting as far as possible the "rational or divine nature." Nevertheless, this animal nature is certainly preferable to the monstrous distortion of it offered by modern society, with its grimy factories and its luxury, its wage-slavery and its "blue devils." Nature, and its free development, is not the ideal, though it is the preliminary

condition of all progress. Consequently, instead of fashioning the child after the model of the so-called civilized adult, let us see to it that nothing distorted or perverted is the outcome.

Though nature be far from perfect, at all events it possesses, throughout the various species, instincts which urge it spontaneously towards the satisfaction of the most pressing needs of the individual. Without being infallible, there is a certainty about these instincts never found in our abstract and aprioristic reasonings on the needs of man. Here, too, preference should be given to the free development of life.

This respect for untrammelled growth summarizes in itself the main principles of Tolstoian pedagogy:

(a) Intellect proceeds from the simple to the complex, though it is not the same with life. Like Bergson, Tolstoi insists on the radical duality of intellect and life. In this respect, he is poles asunder from Hegel, for whom everything that is real is rational, and vice versa; the world and life, in his opinion, being but the working out of a vast syllogism. We are aware that Tolstoi was influenced by Spir, or at all events recognized in Spir the

expression of his own tendencies. He professes Spir's dualism; like him, regarding the origin of the world and that of evil as meaningless and insoluble questions which have nothing in common with the intellect. Life proceeds along its appointed track, as does the intellect, and it is the function of life to realize, with the greatest ease, a state of complexity which intellectual analysis can subsequently unravel only with considerable difficulty. We should allow life, in the child, to follow this course. *Let us not intellectualize life*; to intellectualize it is to put obstacles in its path. Life leaps ahead, where intellect counts its steps. Let us therefore avoid this method of analysis, which is a bed of Procrustes for the child, and which constituted the grave error of Froebel himself: an error whereby this other champion of life condemns his disciples to failure, at all events those who follow him according to the letter and not according to the spirit. Let us resist our intellectualistic tendency to begin in everything with definitions and principles. The child realizes and attains to the consequence quite apart from the principle so let us help him forward along this natural path; only afterwards shall we

have to help him to rise from the consequence to the principle, from the concrete to the abstract, from the complex to the simple.

(b) Given our ignorance of the child's needs, our inability to apprehend them by the intellect alone, we may well permit the child's instinct to express itself. And with this end in view, let him freely manifest his reactions to the instruction we put before him. Above all, let us propose, not impose. *Away with all compulsion!* Thus will the child's reactions express his real needs. Repulsion manifested generally by all the children of about the same age against some particular form of teaching is a proof that this form is decidedly unsuitable for children of that age. The free child thus becomes the natural reagent, the touchstone of teaching systems and methods, both as a whole and in detail. The school in which freedom is practised will become a *laboratory* in which experiments *in vivo* will be made on the various forms of instruction. In this way, and in this way only, will a new basis be supplied for pedagogy, the rational basis of which has been found to be inadequate: along lines of freedom, pedagogy may well become an experimental science. This science, how-

ever, must beware against imitating, against generalizing its results too quickly. Within the province of the human being, individuality insists on being respected, on maintaining priority over the law. And even when general results have been obtained, freedom will still be the criterion of the needs of the individual child.

This freedom does not presuppose simply the absence of compulsion. The child's interest in one form of instruction is the infallible sign that this form is adapted to him and responds to one of his secret needs. But that this may come about, such interest must be biological interest in all its purity, there must be blended with it no extrinsic interest whatsoever, for then it would no longer manifest freely; it would be released by some external cause, and would not be the spontaneous reaction of the individual. And so the principle of freedom, when rightly understood, rejects and denounces not only compulsion, violence and punishment, but also reward, whether immediate or in the distant future. Reward, or the prospect of reward, is beneficial only when study proves distasteful to the child; and this happens only

when badly administered, when it disregards his biological needs.

The prospect of the future advantages or benefits which instruction will confer on the child once he is grown up—apart from the fact that it derives its inspiration from a somewhat inferior morality—is thus condemned, even as a method.

Not only must there be freedom for the child, there must also be freedom for the master; for it is freedom alone that enables mutual relations to be human and natural. And, as we have seen, this freedom presupposes, both for master and for child, independence as regards reward or remuneration, an independence which, in addition, is the guarantee of love, a mighty factor in all fruitful education.

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Absolute freedom, however, with the best will in the world, is a purely fanciful conception. To remove influences so that nature may freely manifest may become at any moment a contradiction in terms, for even nature herself is made up of influences. In the nature of man, and especially of the child,

there is constantly working a force by means of which the absolute spontaneity of the individual becomes an abstraction impossible to realize. This force is suggestion.

Suggestion plays a large part in the doctrine of Tolstoi. This has not been sufficiently understood: which is one reason for insisting on it here. In addition, it is regarding education that Tolstoi's ideas on this subject are most clearly made known—we have seen that he identifies education with suggestion—and it is perhaps mainly on this point that Tolstoi the teacher will enlighten us as regards Tolstoi the philosopher, by drawing our attention to one aspect of his thought which has received but slight attention.

So searching and penetrating a psycho logist could not allow to pass unnoticed this powerful and misjudged force of suggestion. Throughout his literary work there are scattered many observations in proof of this. In *War and Peace* he frequently remarks that man, by directing his attention, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, upon one object and withdrawing it from another, changes the value of these objects: their value is not in them, but in himself. They

possess such value or importance as he persuades himself that they have. Peter Bezoukhof, the prisoner, admires the power given to man to avert his glance from whatever gives him pain. Natacha also attributes to her children, to her successive childbirths, such importance that these restricted interests become so increased in her eyes as to fill the entire universe:

"It is known that man has the power to devote himself entirely to a single object, however insignificant it may appear; it is also known that there is no single thing, however trifling, which does not become magnified indefinitely, once the attention is fixed upon it."

In the *Kreutzer Sonata*, Tolstoi compares the penetrating suggestion of art with the contagious suggestion of gesture.

"Music seems to me to act like yawning or laughing: though having no inclination to sleep, I nevertheless yawn when I see others yawn; without any motive for laughing, I yet laugh when I hear others laugh."

When the Nancy School had scientifically formulated suggestion as a fact in normal psychology, Tolstoi's attention was immediately attracted by the innovation. He

adopted the doctrine. He would assuredly have agreed with the saying of Bernheim: "Everything is not in suggestion, but suggestion is in everything."

"All human activity is called forth by three impulsive causes: feeling, reason, and suggestion, the state which doctors call hypnosis. At times, man acts only under the influence of feeling, aspiring to attain that which he desires. Then again, he acts under the influence of reason, which shows him what he ought to do. But *most frequently*, man acts because he *himself* has inspired in himself—or other men have inspired in him—a certain activity, and he unconsciously yields to this suggestion. . . . . ." [1]

"Himself or other men." As we see, Tolstoi recognizes auto-suggestion as a very common spring of human activity. True, adopting even the exaggerations of the young School, he tends to confuse, somewhat unduly, suggestion with habit, as did Bernheim himself. And then, does not the auto-suggestion of which he speaks risk becoming one with the simplest phenomenon of habit? Tolstoi passes along the brink of this confusion, so to speak; occasionally he may fall

[1] *What is Religion?*

into it; though as a rule, his cautiousness as a psychologist saves him. He reserves the name of suggestion to that which, in habit, proceeds manifestly from the ideo-reflex process which is at the root of all suggestion: for instance, the impulse to follow to-day the same path we took yesterday, an impulse brought about by recognized visual images and by remembered motor images.

If feeling were absent, man would undertake nothing; if reason were absent, he would give way simultaneously to a number of feelings that were contradictory and harmful to himself and others; if the power to submit *to his own suggestion* and to that of others were absent, he would constantly have to be experiencing the feeling which would impel him along a certain line of activity and to be subjecting his reason to the control of the opportuneness of his feelings. This is why these three motives are necessary in every human act, however simple it be. The reason a man walks from one place to another is because, feeling impelling him to pass from one place to another, reason approves of this intention and prescribes the means of carrying it out (in this instance, by walking along a certain path). The muscles of the

body obey, and the man follows the path indicated. At the same time, when he walks, feeling and reason are left free for another activity, a thing that could not be unless there were the capacity of submitting to suggestion. It is so with all human activities, even in the case of the most important of all, the religious activity. Feeling stirs up the need of establishing relations between man and God, reason defines this relationship, suggestion impels man to the activity that results therefrom." [1]

The suggestion upon which Tolstoi insists most strongly is that which governs opinions, superstitions, beliefs. This suggestion is made possible by the "hypnotic" state—that into which the Church and the government, for instance, plunge the people. This hypnotic condition is one in which the attention is fascinated by, obstinately brought back to, certain objects that are speedily given a monstrous and exaggerated importance. And so Tolstoi would give hypnosis an entirely psychological and original definition. Hypnosis is not necessarily a sleep, it is rather a state of mental fascination in which the points of comparison are lacking,

[1] *What is Religion?*

discursive reason is powerless, and attention seems to be in an ecstatic condition.

"Mankind is divided into two parts: twenty per cent. suffer from insanity and egoistic mania, concentrating all their energies upon themselves; the remaining eighty per cent. are victims of scientific, artistic and governmental hypnosis—and mainly of religious hypnosis; consequently they are no longer governed by reason. This is why success in this world is obtained by those who suffer from the particular form of insanity which afflicts the majority."[1]

This state of hypnosis or suggestion creates both inhibitions and excitations, forces which exist only because they are believed in, but which nevertheless may enter into conflict with objective forces, and neutralize them.

"Strength belongs to the working classes. The reason why they tolerate or bear with oppression is because they are hypnotized. To dissipate this hypnosis is everything."[1]

Besides, this psychological state may be aroused not only by persuasion and imitation, but by physical means that are most brutal and that remind one of the visual fascination

[1] *Journal intime*, 1895-1900; Jeheber, Genève.

employed by doctors. The play of colour on the gold-embroidered garments worn by priests, all the colour and glitter of martial uniforms and banners: these are almost childish means to employ, though they have a definite hypnotic influence on the masses. Everything that is solemn and imposing, everything that strikes the imagination, encourages hypnosis. Lastly art itself, in the strict meaning of the word, should be looked upon as a hypnotic process.

"The means of suggestion are everywhere and always the same. They consist in taking advantage of that state in which man is most capable of being the object of suggestion (childhood, the important events of life, such as death, birth, marriage),[1] as well as of works of art: architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dramatic performances,—a state of receptivity similar to that obtained for man more particularly by induced sleep—in order to inspire in him whatever suggestion is desirable.[2]

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[1]Such is the remarkable idea subsequently developed by Paul Souriau (Nancy), in *La Suggestion dans l'Art*, Alcan, Paris.

[2]Tolstoi has thoroughly grasped the "law of auxiliary emotion" as I have called it in 'Suggestion and Auto-suggestion,' according to which a suggestion is strengthened when received in an emotional state.

Suggestion, therefore is frequently disastrous: it makes possible the superstitions and slavery from which our society suffers and is all the more powerful seeing that it begins to act in early childhood, the most susceptible age of all:

"From the tenderest infancy, the age most accessible to suggestion, and at which the teacher should be most prudent in imparting instruction to the child, absurd and immoral dogmas, incompatible both with reason and with science are suggested to him."[1]

One of the tasks, and not the least important, of the teacher, will be to see that the child is protected from mischievous suggestions, not to keep suggestion away from him altogether, an utter impossibility. Suggestion, as we have seen, is a force that is normal and necessary to man; and the whole of education is itself but one application of it.

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Suggestion, indeed—like the tongue in Aesop's fable—may become either the worst or the best of things. Education, therefore, *as far as possible, must eliminate bad sugges-*

[1] *What is Religion?*

tions and strengthen good ones. *In this its rôle will be analogous as regards the child, to the rôle of art as regards the whole of mankind.* Like art, education is a force of suggestion. But the fact that there are such things as evil suggestions, which condemn certain forms of education as well as certain forms of art, is no reason why we should condemn suggestion wholesale.

There can be no education at all without suggestion, but suggestion is as efficacious in the right as in the wrong direction; it supplies one of the great wants of mankind. It has a part to play in the loftiest departments of human life. All ardent activity which pursues one end to the exclusion of others, all belief or faith that inspires confidence in the importance of our actions by concentrating our whole interest in them upon that object, presupposes suggestion, fascination. And since, as Tolstoi frequently says, "faith is that whereby men live," it is fitting that he should add this strange corollory, the significance of which he has grasped: "Without hypnosis, men could not live."[1]

This hypnosis, this necessary suggestion,

[1] *Dernières Paroles.* Mercure de France.

will if necessary have to be administered voluntarily in the form of the most conscious auto-suggestion. We must fascinate ourselves with what we have recognized as best:

"Man cannot continually remain at the level he occasionally reaches; the only thing is, once this level has been attained, he must hypnotize himself so that, during periods of depression, he may act in conformity with the revelation he has been given on the higher levels. The main thing is that he should learn to profit by these moments on the mountain-tops, that he should be able to hypnotize himself."[1]

And—seeing that absolute freedom in education is impossible, since we cannot help practising suggestion on the child—we must see to it that this suggestion is directed upwards, towards spiritual and moral objects.

"The truths of the religion common to all the men of our time are so simple and comprehensible, so near to the heart of each man, that it would appear as though all that is needed is for parents, tutors and teachers to inspire both in children and in adults the clear and simple truths of this common

[1] *Journal intime*, 1895-1900.

religion. . . . . . Instead of suggesting to children—as is now done—and confirming in adults, faith in God having sent His only Son to redeem the sin of Adam and having established His Church, to which, along with all the rules it teaches, obedience must be given—let it be similarly suggested and confirmed that God is a Spirit whose manifestation is living within us and whose power we are able to increase according to the way in which we spend our lives."[1]

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRAGMATISM OF TOLSTOI

Pragmatism—mainly associated with the name of William James—is the tendency to regard human intelligence as a function which is essentially active (pragma), far more than contemplative or even representative, and to look upon truth itself as one form of activity. A truth, say the pragmatists, is not the copy, the portrait, of an objective

[1] *What is Religion?*

reality, it is a sort of machine wound up for the efficacious utilizing of this reality, with which it is no more to be identified than is a dynamo to be identified with electricity. Thus, the inauguration of a new truth is far more in the nature of invention than of discovery; and the useful becomes the criterion of the true, on condition we expand the meaning of the word "useful" beyond immediate and matter-of-fact utility and regard it as embracing the highest interests of man. A true idea is not one that is a portrait of the real, it is an idea which functions well, and which, if we conform our actions thereto, affords us no disillusions, as might be the case if we were told that fragments of glass were cotton. It is because it can be practically verified, and because of this alone, that an idea is true; in its practical verifiability, and in that alone, consists the agreement of truth with its object: an agreement which is by no means a resemblance, a relation between portrait and model.

Judging by the writings of Tolstoi on science, he was manifestly not greatly influenced by this American tendency, pragmatism, a movement, indeed, which reached its flood tide only during the latter years of

Tolstoi's life.[1] Still, it may be said that Tolstoi was always, temperamentally, more or less of a pragmatist without knowing it. In *War and Peace*, he writes as follows:

"When the apple is ripe, it falls. Why does it fall? Is it because it is attracted towards the ground, because the stalk is withered, because it is sun-dried, because it is becoming heavy, because the wind shakes it off the branch, or because the urchin below wants to eat it?

Nothing is the cause, everything is but the concordance of those conditions in which each vital, organic elementary event comes about, and the botanist who thinks the apple falls because its tissue is in a state of decomposition, etc., will be just as right as the child below who tells himself that the apple has fallen because he wants to eat it and has prayed that this may come about."

Here, in paradoxical form, is a very pragmatistic idea: that quite different interpretations are equally true, so long as they work equally well and so long as action on our part, based on these interpretations, meets with the same success.

[1]According to William James himself, the word dates from 1878, but the idea was first expressed only in 1898.

In the *Syllabary*, this idea becomes more distinctly pronounced. Tolstoi expresses the strange conviction that we should tend to offer the child, to a far less degree, ideas which we regard as true, than ideas within his comprehension.

"In cosmography, do not explain to the pupil—as is generally done by the pedagogue—the solar system, or the earth's rotation. To a pupil who knows nothing of the apparent movements of the heavenly bodies, of sun, moon and planets, of eclipses, of observations of these phenomena seen from different points of the earth's surface, the explanation that the earth turns and moves of itself does not shed light on the matter, nor is it an explanation at all; it is nothing but a pack of nonsense devoid of the slightest—even apparent—necessity. A pupil who believes that the earth stands on the water and on the fishes is far better able to judge than the one who believes that the earth revolves, without being able either to understand or to explain it."[1]

This reminds one strangely of a passage from the great pragmatist, Henri Poincaré the mathematician:

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[1]*Oeuvres complètes, tome XIV., appendice.*

"Absolute space, i.e., the datum to which the earth must be referred if we are to know whether it does really turn, has no objective existence whatsoever. Hence the affirmation: 'the earth turns' is devoid of meaning, seeing that no experiment will enable us to verify it; for such an experiment not only could not be realized nor dreamt of by the most daring Jules Verne, but cannot even be conceived without contradiction; or rather the two propositions: 'the earth turns' and 'it is more convenient to suppose that the earth turns' have but one and the same meaning; there is nothing more in the one than in the other." [1]

The reason Tolstoi is a pragmatist in pedagogy is because he is a pragmatist in philosophy. His uncompromising sincerity would never have allowed him to prefer half-truths for a child, under the pretext that they come within the pupil's understanding. In his eyes, a half-truth that the child can understand is not a half-truth. It is truer for the child than a whole truth (to the adult mind) that is incomprehensible to him. Above all, truth is practical, and the whole

[1] H. Poincaré, *La science et l'hypothèse*, p. 141, Flammarion, Paris.

thing is to find out whether it works, not whether it agrees with its object—agreement, indeed, which cannot be verified in the case of any truth whatsoever. Thus, behind Tolstoi's pedagogic pragmatism, lies an entirely original conception of truth and consequently a theory of science.

To his mind, also, instruction and science are inseparable. The former is but an application of the latter. In a long article replying to a peasant who appealed to him for enlightenment on the subject of instruction, Tolstoi begins by transposing the question in this way:

"As instruction, after all, is but the possession of what science recognizes, I shall speak only of science." [1]

Now, the originality of the conception Tolstoi forms of science is that it is a pragmatistic conception.

* * * * *

As a disciple of Kant and Spir, Tolstoi is above all else a relativist. More especially after reading Spir (1896),[2] the outer world, the world of our sensations, appears before

[1] From an unpublished letter lying on my desk.

[2] Compare *Journal intime*, 1895-1900, Jeheber, Genève.

him as a mighty illusion, a distortion or deformation of reality by the instruments which constitute our senses. As touch, oddly enough, corrects the perception of the world which sight affords us, reveals the illusion of perspective, and proves to be a solid that which sight showed as a surface—in the same way, if we were gifted with other senses, we should again have an entirely different perception of the world. Here we have what Tolstoi calls the "unreality of matter." Under the form of the sensations we unite under the name of matter or the external world, it is not the real world that we perceive, but rather its deformation, its elaboration by our senses.

"The fundamental idea of Spir's teaching is that there is no such thing as matter; it is our impressions that are interpreted as objects in our consciousness. The idea, or image-representation (Vorstellung), possesses the faculty of believing in the existence of objects because the mental process has the power to materialize impressions, to attribute substance to them and to project them into space."

Consequently, no knowledge—not even scientific knowledge which also is based on

the data of the senses—can be objective. No knowledge is a copy of reality; on the contrary, all knowledge is relative—relative both to man and to the organization of his nature.

"The theory according to which the world is in reality such as one of its innumerable creatures—man—conceives it to be through his five senses, sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste, is an altogether arbitrary and false one. This is so, because, in the case of any being endowed with other senses, for instance, the crawfish, microscopical insects and a considerable number of animals, known and unknown, the world will be quite different."[1]

This relativism became still more firmly established in Tolstoi's mind by the ideas of the English thinker, Edward Carpenter,[2] for whom in 1897 he wrote a preface to an article dealing critically with contemporary science.

Again science, according to Tolstoi, cannot even set before itself the ideal assigned to it by Kant: to explore—in default of the real and absolutely objective world—at all events

[1] *What is science?*

[2] Compare M. Senard, *Edward Carpenter et sa philosophie.* Art indépendant, Paris.

the system of the relative representations which our senses give us of this inaccessible world, and to organize them into sure and solid—though relative—knowledge.

"Let us admit that, in default of the possibilty of conceiving the world such as it is in reality, we content ourselves with studying our representation of it—even then, the exigencies of reasonable scientific curiosity cannot be satisfied." [1]

The fact is that Tolstoi here comes into contact with the idea of the infinitude of the world of the senses, a world we cannot measure with our finite means of knowledge.

"The causes and the consequences of each phenomenon, as well as the relations of things with one another, can therefore never be *really* understood. These causes and these consequences become lost in the infinite past and future of time."

Thus is science finally despoiled of all theoretical or contemplative value. Any value it may have can no longer be as a representation of the world, but as a means of action.

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[1] Compare M. Senard, *Edward Carpenter et sa philosophie.* Art indépendant, Paris.

Among the innumerable facts which make up the world of sense, we are absolutely compelled to choose some which we shall make our object of study: an object invariably ridiculous when compared with the infinitude of the universe:

"Science studies *everything*—say the men of science. But this is too much. The number of subjects to be studied is enormous; one cannot study everything. Just as a lantern sheds its light only on the limited space towards which it is directed, or upon the path followed by the man who carries it, so science cannot study everything; inevitably it studies only certain points to which its attention is drawn. The lantern throws a vivid light upon the place close at hand; the light becomes more and more feeble the farther the objects are away, and leaves in the shade those objects it is unable to reach. So is it with the whole of human science." [1]

This necessary choice takes place more particularly by means of *theories*. Theory is the path along which we walk with our lantern; the conducting rod, so to speak, that sets us in the right direction amid the vast confusion of reality.

[1] Preface to Carpenter's article on Science, unpublished in French.

"Present-day scientists are fond of saying with due solemnity and assurance: 'we study nothing but facts,' and they fancy that these words possess some sort of meaning. To study nothing but facts is impossible, for there is an *incalculable* number—in the literal meaning of the word—of facts that come before our observation. Before studying facts, one must have a theory in accordance with which we choose certain facts from among the innumerable quantity of facts." [1]

But then, how can a theory help us in exploring? To the mind of Tolstoi, a theory would appear to be a *comparison.* We apprehend certain resemblances between one order of facts and another order of facts. Then we follow out the comparison, a thing that is always more or less possible, and the theory is successful when we contrive to set up between the two orders of facts—though in a more or less far-fetched manner—a *connected resemblance*, a parallelism.

Thus, to adopt Tolstoi's example, the sociological theory of Auguste Comte consists in reviving a comparison already expressed by Menenius Agrippa in a fable: the comparison of mankind to an organism—and

[1] *What should we do?*

following out this comparison as far as the facts, which may be unscrupulously strained for the purpose, will allow.

Hence the utility of the theory is manifest: by noting all possible points of resemblance between two orders of facts, it makes them coincide in a single scheme or plan. Our memory unburdens itself and thus simplifies too dense a reality, just as it does when substituting the general idea of 'house,' for instance, for all the images of individual houses, which it is unable to retain.

Scientific laws are nothing else than these schemata, these convenient generalizations. By slightly systematizing—though, I think, without distorting—the thought of Tolstoi, we may say that theory is an attempted comparison, and that law is a successful comparison.

In this way we are incidentally supplied with the answer to an objection which might have been brought against Tolstoi when he claimed that the world of sense is scientifically unknowable, because it is infinite. One might indeed answer that the infinity of facts resolves into a restricted number of simple and general laws, whereof facts are but a kind of minute and detailed

application. For Tolstoi, however, as for the pragmatists, law is far from being a reality superior to facts; it is a convenient formula for helping us to register facts, a compartment in which to classify them, no more:

"Carpenter proves that neither astronomy, nor physics, nor chemistry, nor biology, nor sociology enables us truly to become acquainted with reality. He demonstrates that all the laws discovered by these sciences are but generalizations that are approximate outlines of laws—and even these seem to be laws only because they appear before us in certain conditions and we discover them in a region so far removed from ourselves in time and space that it is impossible to explain the non-comformity of these laws with reality."[1]

But whereas, in the case of a speculative mind, a Poincaré, who has become a pragmatist by reasoning, the fact culminating in laws is sufficient to justify a theory; on the other hand, for a practical mind like Tolstoi, this very fact is in itself a barren operation. He looks upon a theory as successful when it is really beneficial to mankind.

As a rule, we make a spontaneous choice

[1]Preface to the Carpenter article.

of those theories which flatter our instincts, our egoism. For instance, the theory of Auguste Comte, poor as regards any outcome or result in laws capable of being well formulated, has nevertheless met with this kind of success. Mankind, according to Comte, is an organism; hence individuals and their clans become organs which have different functions, and in this way social inequality, the well-being of the cultured classes, who appropriate science to themselves and adjust it to suit their egoism, find themselves justified. In its turn, the Darwinian theory of evolution received so favourable a welcome because it happened to support Comte's theory. Darwin interpreted organisms as being derived from one another; he showed that an organism was capable of resulting from an association of smaller organisms; hence mankind appeared as an organism in process of formation.

If, however, on the other hand, we rise from the animal and egoistic point of view to the moral and Christian one, the very theories that were good will become bad. Truth will find its centre of gravity displaced. And in virtue of this same pragmatism, that science alone will be good and true which promotes human love.

Moreover, apart from the choice allowed us by theories, there is another choice, which is inevitable between the various domains of the world of sense, between the great bundles of facts which nature offers us ready grouped, in other words, between the different sciences. Here also it is the useful that guides us. At the root of the desire for instruction, there is mostly the desire for an easier social position.[1] But no soooner have we become aware of our higher, our spiritual interests, than our point of view changes, and the sciences which will appear most expedient to improve by means of discovery and to assimilate by means of instruction, will be the sciences calculated to help us in the progress of mankind. Hence the scorn exhibited by Tolstoi for knowledge regarding the weight of the sun or the conquests of Alexander of Macedonia.

In this matter, however, the writings of Tolstoi on science, as we now have them, seem to leave a gap. And Lévy-Bruhl may always answer:

"The *scientific* pursuit of immediately utilizable results is possible, as is proved by the works of Pasteur himself, only by reason of previous investigations of a purely

[1] *What is Science?*

speculative character, in which the scientist had set before himself only the discovery of the laws of phenomena." [1]

Tolstoi does not appear to have seriously considered the objection, nor to have indicated any criterion whereby we may recognize which domains of science hold the richest promise for the welfare of humanity. This side of his thought gives the impression of incompleteness. He would appear, as regards this choice, to refer the matter to a sort of good sense which he does not dispute, to the postulate—fairly admissible after all —that the things nearest to us from every point of view are those which act most evidently upon us and which it is most important for us to know.

Hence comes the indifference he professes with regard to astronomy. In the same connection, Auguste Comte had previously asserted that it was unprofitable and vain to attempt to find out the composition of the sun, seeing that the knowledge of this would be of no service to sociology. The fact remains, however, that such an idea has been

[1] Lévy-Bruhl, *Morale et science des mœurs*, Alcan, Paris.

criticized, even from the pragmatist point of view, by Poincaré. [1]

As we see, Tolstoi's pragmatism is the synthesis of tendencies that were always dominant in him: his humanism, which is interested principally and almost exclusively in the man of flesh and blood, and has profound sympathy with this man both from the standpoint of psychological understanding and from that of benevolent emotion—his realism, which loves concrete facts and professes a certain disdain for abstractions, in which it suspects the very contrary of reality—his practical tendency, set in the direction of activity, and activity of the most useful kind.

We may also add that profound instinct or estimate of life, in which there is revealed to him, as to Bergson, something fundamentally alien to the intellect, so that the latter, if it would understand life, has to make a fresh effort upon itself.

"Experimental scientists do not study everything, as they imagine and claim to do —they study that which is most advantageous

[1]H. Poincaré, *La valeur de la science.* Flammarion, p. 166.

and easy to study. Now . . . . . it is easiest to study all that has no life." [1]

It is life, however, with which it is important that we should acquaint ourselves. The intellect, therefore, should overcome its natural aloofness from life, seeing that our higher interest is not to follow the line of least resistance, but rather to further the amelioration of life.

Tolstoi's pragmatism is obstinately directed towards life, towards the urge to live.

"Men of science may quietly assert that in 1882 there were walking the streets, so many beggars, so many prostitutes, so many abandoned children. . . . . . But suppose we who are not men of science say: You shall perish in a state of debauch, you shall die of hunger, you are ill and are killing one another, therefore do not trouble yourselves. When you are all dead, and hundreds of thousands of others like yourselves, then perhaps science will put everything right." [2]

Such calm indifference on the part of modern scientists is revolting to Tolstoi.

"Yes, but when will this be? We have no

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[1] Preface to the Carpenter article.
[2] *What are we to do?*

time to wait. You confess that it will be some generations before you know this yourselves. But we are living in the present, to-day, to-morrow we shall be dead; that is why we must know how to spend our life now. Then teach us!''[1]

Such is the cry of suffering humanity, one that Tolstoi makes his own. With this urgent appeal, science, which has no other rationale than a higher utility, must reckon. Now, the science which answers this burning question is religion. It points out to us the path. And it is the function of the other sciences to make it possible for us to follow this path. But without religion, i.e., moral certitude, everything falls to pieces. The other sciences can give us the means only, not the end.

[1]Preface to the Carpenter article.

CONCLUSION

FROM TEACHER TO THINKER

Such are the ideas of Tolstoi the thinker. It would be difficult, and not very profitable, to supplement this exposition of fact by a critical examination of his point of view; for Tolstoi has crossed the threshold, so to speak, of almost every department of the new pedagogy; his principles lead straight to the "new schools," to the experimental science of teaching, to educative suggestion,[1] and it would scarcely be possible to discuss them without entering upon the study of all these questions; in which case, the discussion would deal less with Tolstoi than with the whole field of the new education. We will merely note this encounter or clash of Tolstoi's with the great renovating tendencies of present-day pedagogy: a clash, indeed, even more than a direct influence; the rôle of a forerunner rather than that of an

[1]Baudouin, *Suggestion et Auto-suggestion*, Delachaux & Niestlé, Neuchâtel, 1920. (English translation by Ed. & Cedar Paul; G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd.)

instigator. But is not this very encounter the finest guarantee of the firm foundation of Tolstoi's ideas, since we now find the most cautious and circumspect scholars and scientists confirming the intuitions of his genius?

But after all, there is no need to exaggerate the peculiar nature of this "encounter." Tolstoi is not simply intuitive; we have seen that he is also acquainted with the spirit of method, the purpose of observation and experimentation, and he is using no mere figure of speech in suggesting that the school should be turned into a "laboratory." His work is scientific, and it is no wonder that he runs counter to—or that he goes beyond—the conclusions of the scientists. Though in our Western lands his direct influence upon pedagogy does not seem worthy of mention,[1] in Russia, on the other hand, it is considerable. The Tolstoian spirit is also manifested in very fine private initiatives, for, whereas the "new schools" of the West for the most part have the grave defect of being accessible only to the children of the wealthy, there have

[1]It is anything but unlikely that some of the many visitors to Yasnaia may have given our schools the benefit of their experience.

sprung up in Russia similar schools[1] though of a popular character, as was the school of Yasnaia Poliana. At the time of the revolution of 1905, it was mainly the influence of American ideas on education that made itself felt in Russia,[2] ideas which attribute supreme importance to manual work in education. Inspired by this example, there appeared work schools, colonies or settlements, and here too, it was noteworthy that great interest was shown in the children of the poor. It is too early yet to give any definite outline of the educational work that has been taking place in Russia since the revolution of 1917; but what can be said is that in this direction there would appear to be considerable activity on the part of the new government, that this activity is largely independent of its political activity and will have to be judged independently of any political passion or opinion. Lounatcharsky, whose task it was

[1]Regarding one of these schools (the Alekseevska school) compare *O.V. Popeliaieva Tri goda priepodovania.* Kouchneriov, Moscow, 1911.

By reason of its many illustrations, this work is interesting even to those who are unacquainted with Russian.

[2]Compare P. Biroukov, *Histoire de la pédagogie russe*, in *La Feuille*, Genève, No. 9, Septembre, 1919.

to organize public instruction, would appear to have assimilated fairly well the educational ideas of Tolstoi, and the work hitherto realized may doubtless be looked upon as the product of a synthesis of Tolstoi's ideas and the American ideas introduced in 1905; both of these, indeed, have points in common, more particularly a common solicitude for superior practical methods, a common *pragmatistic* inspiration.[1]

But though difficult at present to study the influence of Tolstoi's ideas, it is nevertheless permissible to emphasize their importance to those who would form a correct idea of the intellectual outlook of Tolstoi the thinker. It would seem as though one could not really understand his mind unless it had been seen at work on the science of education. Pedagogy was his first interest in life—at the age of twenty-one. Subsequently, when he devoted himself to literature, his first work was entitled *Childhood.* It is in the field of education that his life, from beginning to end, has shown the most complete unity. His ideas on school teaching mark the evolution of a slow development, not the revolution of

[1]Compare W. James. *Causeries pédagogiques*, Payot, Paris et Lausanne, 1917, and my own article on this book in *La Feuille*, Genève, Septembre, 1919.

a crisis. On this point, and on this point alone, Tolstoi's ideas have not been in conflict with one another, nor has he burnt what once he worshipped. In other words, it is along these lines that his thought became earliest self-conscious.

Tolstoi's philosophical and social ideas after the crisis are but the generalization, for the adult man, of the ideas he had always advanced as regards the child. Freedom, non-resistance and inviolence, an organic moral order emanating from external anarchy, the superiority of life over intellect, the necessity of living human relationships above the dual barrier of artificial hierachies and cold abstractions, the unconcern for theoretical knowledge at the cost of knowledge of the concrete, the living and the useful, and finally the law of love, towering above the ruins of the other laws—all these ideas bursting into manifestation in the philosopher after the crisis, to the wonder or the stupefaction of mankind, had long been present in Tolstoi the teacher.

Hence, if we have understood the psychological and profoundly realistic bases of the teacher's ideas, we have at the same time discovered those of the philosopher's most

disconcerting ideas. And since the former, cruelly scoffed at or scorned as they were when they first appeared, tend to become more and more confirmed by the discoveries of science, we may ask ourselves if a like fate is not in store for the most daring of Tolstoi's apparent Utopias, whether the "new pedagogy," which unintentionally finds itself to be Tolstoian, is not preparing the way for a "new sociology" which also will be more or less Tolstoian. But when we regard Tolstoi's ideas on education as resulting in his social ideas, we are setting limits to a critical examination of these latter. How far can pedagogy really serve as a basis for sociology, and how far is it permissible to generalize from the child to the man?—this, in our opinion, is the problem presented by the evolution of Tolstoi, this the standpoint from which his social ideas should be examined.

Without venturing upon such an enquiry, we ought, at all events to recognize that Tolstoi's ideas, even if they do offer moral and social generalizations of too absolute a character, have nevertheless a solid and real basis of observation. Tolstoi—though his claim to the title has been contested—is a

thinker in the best sense of the word; it cannot be denied that he is better acquainted with human nature than are most expounders of morality or professors of ethics. Still, it is our duty to add that *this thinker is above all else an educator*; his teachings, not to be accepted without a certain amount of reserve in the case of the adult, become more and more imperative when we are dealing with the child and assert themselves irresistibly after due reflection and experience. In these teachings, too, education plays a dominant part; it is through it—through Tolstoian education—that Tolstoi mainly envisages the possibility of the humanity after which he so ardently aspires. It is with the child that a beginning of the practice of love and inviolence must be made; this preliminary condition once granted, Tolstoi's ideal humanity appears before us in a far less Utopian guise.

Tolstoi, in his inmost being, was a teacher. It was when occupied in educational pursuits that he felt most at home. And when his friend Paul Biroukov, perplexed by the ever uneasy, perturbed and self-dissatisfied conscience of the grand old man, once asked him: "Then have you never in your life

experienced feelings of utter content?"—"Yes," answered Tolstoi, "when I have had children to occupy my time and attention."

APPENDIX.

The following works may profitably be consulted:

Wassilij Morossow: *Erinnerungen eines Jassnopoljaner Schülers an Leo Tolstoj* (Frobenius, Bâle)

Giulio Vitali: *Tolstoï pedagogista.* (Palermo, 1914)

A. Ferrière: *Léon Tolstoï et la liberté dans l'éducation*, (an article contributed to *L'Educateur*, Lausanne, No. 4, February, 1921)

INDEX

Tolstoi
the
Teacher

BAUI

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